

A briefing for carers: Information about the Government's open consultation on *the right to take Carer's Leave*, and how to submit your individual response

About this briefing:

The Government is currently consulting on its plans to introduce [Carer's Leave](#) for employees in paid employment, as a vital step in helping both business and families providing care to disabled, older and ill relatives and friends to continue working.

Government has said that they intend this right to be *one week's unpaid leave*. The consultation covers England, Wales, and Scotland. Northern Ireland devises its own legislation.

Carers UK wants to ensure that carers are aware of, and understand what Government is proposing, and ensure that carers are able and supported to respond in time.

The Government wants to hear from individual unpaid carers, to get your views on how introducing Carer's Leave would affect you and the person(s) that you care for. For example, would it make you less tired? Would it help you to find the right care? Would it help you to take the person you care for to hospital appointments?

This is an issue that Carers UK has been campaigning for over many years; it is absolutely vital that Government hears loud and clear from as many carers as possible that introducing Carer's Leave would be a positive step even if it is a week's unpaid leave.

You will need to respond by 3 August 2020 – it's really important that Government hears from unpaid carers.

Carers UK's view:

Carers UK has warmly welcomed the Government's consultation. We believe that during and post COVID-19 this issue is more important than ever for families, businesses, and the economy. At a time when the NHS and social care system are under extreme pressure, family support has been relied on more than ever.

Whilst Carers UK recognises that the Government's plans for introducing a weeks' unpaid leave would still deliver positive benefits, we believe this would be even more effective if this was paid. We also believe that Government should commit to staged increases to 10 days paid leave, with a longer period of unpaid leave of up to six months.

We have strong evidence that Carer's Leave:

- helps unpaid carers to juggle work and care;
- provides benefits for business in retaining skilled employees;
- positively changes workplace culture to be more family friendly and inclusive;

- helps support the NHS and social care more broadly.

How to respond to this consultation:

The consultation itself can be found on the Governments' website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/carers-leave>

The deadline for responding to this consultation is **3 August 2020**:

- You can respond online here: <https://beisgovuk.citizenspace.com/lm/carersleave>
- Or email a response to: labourmarketparticipation@beis.gov.uk

Why is this an important issue?

- **The total number of working carers is now estimated to be: 7.67 million people.** Pre-pandemic, there were 4.87 million adults juggling work and unpaid care – 1 in 7 of all workers¹. Since the crisis, we estimate that around 2.8 million additional people have been juggling work and care². For 72%, providing care is on top of full-time paid work³.
- **Pre-crisis around 2.6 million people had given up work to care, the equivalent of 600 people a day⁴.** A quarter of working carers have also considered giving up their job entirely, whilst 30% of working carers had reduced the hours they work and 36% had refused a job offer or promotion, or decided not to go for a job⁵.
- **Recent research⁶ showed that 44% of working carers reported that they found it difficult to combine their paid employment and caring responsibilities.**
- **There are clear benefits to unpaid carers and the people they care for;** 80% of carers say that additional paid Carer's Leave of between five and ten days would help them to juggle work and unpaid care⁷. 89% of the public support a right to a short period of time off work to care⁸
- **There are also big benefits to employers and business;** there is evidence that the impact of staff turnover, absence and stress as a result of juggling work and caring unsupported could be costing UK businesses over £3.5 billion every year, so there are significant savings to be made by better supporting employees to combine work and caring. Centrica has saved around £1.8 million per annum through the application of its carer policies in terms of preventing unplanned absences and presenteeism and a further £1.3 million per annum in retention savings.⁹
- **Carer's Leave would also benefit the wider economy;** by keeping carers' in work, we could be adding over £5.3 billion to the economy¹⁰. Centrica estimates that UK companies could save up to £4.8 billion a year in unplanned absences and a further

¹ Carers UK (2020) 'Juggling work and unpaid care: a growing issue'

² Carers Week (2020) 'Making Caring Visible'

³ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/supporting-working-carers-1_tcm18-80339.pdf (Accessed 25/06/2020)

⁴ Carers UK (2020) 'Juggling work and unpaid care: a growing issue'

⁵ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/supporting-working-carers-1_tcm18-80339.pdf (Accessed 25/06/2020)

⁶ https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/supporting-working-carers-1_tcm18-80339.pdf (Accessed 25/06/2020)

⁷ Carers UK (2020) 'Juggling work and unpaid care: a growing issue'

⁸ <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/the-case-for-care-leave>

⁹ <https://www.centrica.com/news/carers-uk-and-centrica-announce-new-partnership-improve-lives-carers>

¹⁰ Age UK (2012) Care in crisis: more than £5.3 billion wiped from the economy

£3.4 billion in improved employee retention by adopting flexible working policies to support those with caring responsibilities¹¹.

The main questions in the consultation – Carers UK's view

The following points are Carers UK's views on some of the questions asked in the consultation. Please include them when submitting your response to the consultation if you wish to:

1. We think all working carers should have these rights from day one – i.e. as soon as you start work you would have the right to take Carer's Leave.
2. We think that the definition of caring should be really broad so that it encompasses all types of caring situations.
3. Parents of disabled children should get these extra rights too, not just people caring for adults.
4. Carers should be able to take the leave in small parts e.g. half a day or a day. This is better for carers and for employers. Having to take leave on larger chunks would not work for carers in reality.
5. Carers should have to apply for Carer's Leave at the time when they think they are going to need it, so that they don't have to come back at the end of the year – that is easier for everyone.
6. We agree that the definition of who the carer is supporting also needs to be kept broad, so that it covers all types of caring situations e.g. LGBTQ+ people, the refugee community, etc.
7. We think that there should be a really clear process for solving disputes, e.g. if the employer and the employee don't agree on the need to take leave.

Further information / contact us

Carers UK has also produced a more detailed briefing which examines each of the questions in the Government's consultation document, in more detail. [You can access this more comprehensive briefing document, here.](#)

For further information about this policy briefing, please contact: John Perryman, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Carers UK: john.perryman@carersuk.org

¹¹ <https://www.centrica.com/news/carers-uk-and-centrica-announce-new-partnership-improve-lives-carers>