



**Make Work Pay: Consultation on employment rights for unpaid carers and parents of seriously ill children**

Submission to the Department for Business, Science, Innovation and Trade



## About CIPD

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years.

It has 160,000 members across all sectors and sizes of organisation and provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

Public policy at the CIPD draws on our extensive research and thought leadership, practical advice and guidance, along with the experience and expertise of our diverse membership, to inform and shape debate, government policy and legislation for the benefit of employees and employers. It also seeks to promote and improve best practice in people management and development and to represent the interests of our members.

## Method

- Evidence from the University of Sheffield and CIPD research report (2021) [Supporting working carers: how employers and employees can benefit | CIPD](#)
- Previous [CIPD response to the DBT Carers' Leave Consultation \(2020\)](#)
- Evidence from the CIPD report (2025) - [Flexible and hybrid working practices in 2025 | CIPD](#)
- An online roundtable discussion in June with 20 HR professionals across different sectors and sizes of organisations
- A short CIPD Member survey in July and August 2026 of approx. 100 respondents looking at employer views on introducing paid leave for unpaid working carers
- Evidence from several other sources including [Carers UK](#), [the Centre for Care](#).

## Our response

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

It is **moderately difficult** for employers to access information on how to support carers in the workplace. [Acas](#) and [gov.uk](#) provide information on the legal requirements and employer obligations relating to unpaid carer's leave but the provision of more holistic and comprehensive good practice employer guidance available through either gov.uk or Acas would be helpful, including good practice cross-sector case studies.

We have produced carer-friendly [guidance](#) for our members at the CIPD and the recommendations within the guidance help organisations to:

1. develop and communicate a carer policy, framework or guidance
2. introduce flexible working to support working carers
3. provide leave (paid or unpaid) and be adaptable when carers need leave at short notice
4. help managers to empower carers
5. provide information and peer-to-peer support.

Carers UK and Employers for Carers also provide comprehensive guidance and support for employers and carers themselves.

In our online roundtable with HR professionals, it was felt that more guidance was needed from the Government on who constitutes an unpaid carer and how to support carers in a holistic way - this should not just cover leave but also include flexible working and other policies to help retain unpaid carers. Practical case studies covering examples of different caring responsibilities across a range of different sectors and sized organisations would be very helpful.

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

As referenced above, it would be helpful to have more accessible and comprehensive good practice employer guidance available through either gov.uk or Acas, including cross-sector case studies.

A challenge often identified with unpaid carers is that they don't always see themselves as carers and often feel as though they are just doing their duty or looking after a family member, consequently it might not be something they discuss with their manager or their organisation. Other carers might feel uncomfortable sharing this information with their employer. This might mean that organisations lack awareness about how many of their employees actually have caring responsibilities.

We explored the impact of the Carer's Leave Act 2023 in [our Update on Hybrid and Flexible Working \(2025\) report](#). Over half (52%) of organisations have a policy or procedure for employees to request carer's leave, while 29% don't and 19% don't know. Public sector organisations (75%) are more likely to have a policy or procedure in place than those in the private (46%) and voluntary (59%) sectors, as are those from larger organisations of 250+ (67%) (compared with 33% in small and medium enterprises (SME's)). This suggests that more communication is needed specifically around the Carers Leave entitlement, as well as potentially broader workplace support for unpaid carers.

### **7. *What, if any, additional guidance or information would help employers support carers?***

More holistic and comprehensive good practice employer guidance available through either gov.uk or Acas would be helpful, including good practice cross-sector case studies.



In our online roundtable with HR professionals, it was felt that more guidance was needed from the Government on who constitutes a carer and how to support carers in a holistic way - this should not just cover leave but also include flexible working and other policies to help retain unpaid carers. Practical case studies covering examples of different caring responsibilities across a range of different sectors and sized organisations would be very helpful.

Our roundtable respondents felt that guidance should reinforce the importance of unpaid carers working in partnership with their organisations and providing notice of leave where they were able to do so.

There were also broader concerns raised about the current provision of social care, NHS and special needs educational support, putting additional pressure on unpaid carers.

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

It is moderately difficult for employees to access information on their rights that support their caring responsibilities in the workplace. Basic legal information about Carers leave entitlement is available through gov.uk and Acas but employees may not be aware of this.

Furthermore, as referenced above, some carers might not see themselves as carers, rather that they are just doing their duty or looking after a family member, so they might not think to look for what support is available.

As cited in the response to question 6, [CIPD survey evidence](#) also suggests employer awareness of legal provisions such as unpaid carers leave could be improved, which will potentially impact on employee awareness and support. Furthermore, since the introduction of the Carer's Leave Act 2023 in April 2024, just 15% of organisations say they have seen an increase in requests for time off to manage caring responsibilities, raising questions about employee awareness or affordability of the unpaid leave. Requests are more likely in the private (16%) and public (14%) sectors compared with the voluntary sector (6%), and within larger organisations of 250+ employees (20%).

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

As discussed earlier, one challenge is a general lack of awareness of what constitutes an unpaid carer. Some carers might not see themselves as carers, rather that they are just doing their duty or looking after a family member, so they might not think to even look for what support is available.

Another challenge might be unpaid carers not sharing with their employer or manager that they are a carer with additional responsibilities. In previous [CIPD research with the University of Sheffield \(2020\)](#), twenty-eight per cent of the unpaid carers surveyed had not talked to anyone at work. Thirty-nine per cent of those who had not discussed their caring role said that this was because they did not believe anything would change, while twenty-two per cent said it was 'not the sort of thing that people talk about where I work.'

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

HR participants at our roundtable, suggested the development of a hub for carers on gov.uk would be helpful. This could include carers support, financial wellbeing resources, employee rights, guidance on leave and local and regional support. As one respondent said, "further grouped resources to help people work through the minefield of care, would be helpful."

**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, specific guidance for both employers and unpaid carers themselves in particularly challenging situations would be educational and helpful, particularly if it included practical pointers around the types of employer support that could be helpful.

**12. If yes, what challenging situations should this guidance cover?**

It would be helpful to cover the following challenging situation areas, amongst others, in this guidance:

- Parents of seriously ill children
- Those providing end of life care
- Support for elderly parents who are impacted by challenging ongoing conditions, like dementia.

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

There is mixed awareness of the employment rights currently available to unpaid carers. Our [2025 survey data](#) found that over half (52%) of organisations have a policy or procedure for employees to request carer's leave, while 29% don't and 19% don't know. In terms of wider organisation support, the most common forms of support for carers include flexible working, paid leave and access to in-work support (such as occupational health or carers' networks). Other provisions are signposting to external support, granting unpaid leave longer than a week, and unpaid leave of up to a week (in line with the Carer's Leave Act 2023).

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

Existing employment rights of unpaid carers (including the statutory entitlement to unpaid carers' leave, a right to time off for family and dependents and wider employee workplace rights) are quite effective at helping unpaid carers balance work and care but some challenges still persist.

A Carers UK's 2026 report, [The 'Tipping Point'](#), highlights nearly 3 million unpaid carers in the UK are in paid employment, yet many struggle to balance work and care responsibilities. The research, shows that 47% of working carers are considering reducing their hours or leaving employment due to the cumulative pressures of caring.

In previous [CIPD research \(2020\)](#) with the University of Sheffield, 44% of working carers reported that they found it difficult to combine their paid employment and caring responsibilities. Thirty per cent of working carers had reduced their hours of work because of their caring role. Thirty-six per cent had refused a job offer or promotion, or decided against applying for a job, because of their caring responsibilities.

Research by [Carers UK \(2025\)](#) also showed that the majority of carers are worried about their finances - 51% of carers are worried about living costs and whether they can manage in the future, and 60% feel anxious or stressed when they think about their financial situation.

To improve the effectiveness of current employment rights and to support retention, we have previously called on the Government to introduce 5 days paid Carer's Leave annually. We know that working carers often have to reduce their hours to enable them to fulfil their caring responsibilities and that many have had to re-mortgage or have had to take out loans to cover the cost of the caring they provide ([Carers UK, 2023](#)). The [CIPD/ Sheffield University research](#) also shows that



carers point to paid leave as the most helpful way of supporting them in their caring responsibilities.

We certainly recognise that employers are operating in a challenging economic climate, with increased costs, and legislative changes under the ERA (2025) and further pressure coming from geopolitical conflict.

That said, in a Summer 2026 CIPD poll of over 100 members, 91% of respondents said that in principle they would support the introduction of up to 5 days statutory paid leave for Carers, with just 5% saying they wouldn't. This confirms that even in the current challenging climate, HR professionals believe paid carers leave should be a priority and would support the government's aim of retention.

Given that organisations are navigating many changes through the Employment Rights Act (2025), it would likely be beneficial to delay the introduction of any new rights for unpaid carers to after the ERA (2025) changes have been properly implemented and embedded.

#### ***15. In what circumstances should unpaid carers be able to take carer's leave entitlements?***

We believe unpaid carers should be able to take carers' leave entitlements for the existing reasons listed in the Carers' Leave Act (2023) legislation. As detailed in the 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.

#### ***16. From your perspective, who should a carer be able to take carer's leave entitlements to support?***

We believe carers should be able to take carers' leave entitlements to support the people currently listed in the Carers' Leave Act (2023) legislation. As detailed in the 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.

### **Extending unpaid carers' leave**

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

Our HR roundtable respondents held differing views on whether extending the existing leave entitlement would be helpful. They felt that it depended on the context, of both the employer and the employee and the extent and demands of their caring responsibility.

There were concerns particularly relating to the burden this might place on small and medium sized organisations and in particular sectors like manufacturing - where there is a need to ensure consistency of operations and service.

There was also a concern that in some larger organisations people were using the current leave provision as an entitlement, making their greater 'potential for abuse'. Some felt that the situation was different in small and medium sized organisations where managers have a better understanding of employee's circumstances and caring responsibilities.

Other respondents were supportive of extending unpaid carers leave to a maximum of 10 days - "If people have an emergency or change in circumstances - 5 days might not be enough."



Some felt that the fact that it is unpaid would limit the time that people take because “they just can’t afford to take it.”

Others felt guidance was needed to support managers to take a fair and consistent approach.

One broader concern of extending unpaid carers leave rather than introducing a paid entitlement, is that unpaid or an uncompensated right to take additional leave can risk exacerbating inequalities already known to exist ([Centre for Care, Evidence briefing](#)). Policies that appear neutral may reinforce gender inequalities because they are affected by related issues including persistent gender pay gaps, gendered divisions in unpaid labour and in formal labour markets. A statutory right to unpaid carer’s leave in the context of a gender-segregated labour market with a substantial gender pay gap is likely to exacerbate inequality.

***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?***

Our round-table respondents that were supportive of introducing extended unpaid carers leave felt that this should be for a maximum of 10 days.

Another suggestion was that beyond the statutory entitlement, there could be a right to request but an opportunity to turn down on business reasons, along the lines of the right to request flexible working - “the 5 days is your statutory right - you can request further leave but that might be declined due to a specific business reason.”

***19. In your view, what would be the impact of extending unpaid carer’s leave on employees with caring responsibilities?***

Extending unpaid carers leave could be helpful for carers in some contexts, particularly if there is a change of circumstances, but a challenge will be whether carers can actually afford to take a longer period of unpaid leave and the implications for organisation’s, especially small and medium sized organisations, will need to be taken into account.

***20. In your view, what would be the impact of extending unpaid carer’s leave on employers?***

There were concerns, already outlined, from our HR roundtable respondents that extending unpaid carers’ leave could be challenging. These related specifically to the burden this might place on SME organisations and in particular sectors like manufacturing - where there is a need to ensure consistency of operations and service.

There was also a concern that in some larger organisations people were using the current leave provision as an entitlement, making their greater ‘potential for abuse’.

There was a general consensus by HR roundtable respondents that if unpaid carers’ leave was extended or paid carers leave introduced that evidence would need to be provided - some kind of certification by a relevant professional.

## **A right to return**

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

There were mixed views on this from respondents to our roundtable. Some felt that a shorter period away from work of potentially 3-6 months would be beneficial in helping to support carers to balance work and care but there wasn’t a consensus on whether a ‘right to return’ would be workable for organisations.



There were also concerns about the pressure this might place on organisations, particularly SME's and some felt that employers would need to look for a permanent replacement if carers had an extended period of leave.

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

Again, as above, there wasn't consensus on whether a 'right to return' would be workable for organisations. There were also concerns about the pressure this might place on organisations, particularly SME's and some felt that employers would need to look for a permanent replacement if carers had an extended period of leave.

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

There was a general consensus by roundtable respondents that if unpaid carers' leave was extended, that evidence would need to be provided - some kind of certification by a relevant professional, to prevent potential for abuse.

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

As above, there wasn't consensus on whether a 'right to return' would be workable for organisations. There were also concerns about the pressure this might place on organisations, particularly SME's and some felt that employers would need to look for a permanent replacement, if carers had an extended period of leave.

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

Some felt that a shorter period away from work of potentially 3-6 months would be beneficial in helping to support carers to balance work and care but there wasn't a consensus on whether a 'right to return' would be workable for organisations.

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

There were mixed views on the impact of a 'right to return' from respondents to our roundtable. There were also concerns about the pressure this might place on organisations, particularly SME's and some felt that employers would need to look for a permanent replacement if carers had an extended period of leave.

## **Statutory paid carers leave**

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

On balance, we think a statutory paid carer's leave entitlement of 5 days would be helpful in supporting carers to balance work and care. This would help to support unpaid working carers to remain in work and for employers to retain their considerable skills.

We certainly recognise that employers are operating in a challenging economic climate, with increased costs, and legislative changes under the ERA (2025) and further pressure coming from



geopolitical conflict. That said, in a Summer 2026 CIPD Member poll, 91% of respondents said that in principle they would support the introduction of up to 5 days statutory paid leave for Carers, with just 5% saying they wouldn't. This confirms that even in the current challenging climate, HR professionals believe paid carers leave should be a priority and would support the government's aim of retention.

Given that organisations are navigating many changes through the Employment Rights Act (2025), it would likely be beneficial to delay the introduction of any new rights for unpaid carers to after the ERA (2025) changes have been properly implemented and embedded.

As referenced by the [Centre for Care](#), supporting carers with paid leave is not only good for employees - it's also good for employers. Without adequate support for carers to remain in work, employers face significant risks, including:

- The loss of experienced employees - particularly those aged 45-60, who are most likely to have caring responsibilities
- Higher recruitment and training costs due to reduced retention
- Increased absenteeism and unnecessarily long absences, as carers lack flexible options to take short periods of leave
- Declining productivity, as the wellbeing of staff managing care and work deteriorates
- Difficulty attracting and retaining the next generation of workers, who prioritise supportive, flexible workplace policies.

We explored the impact of the Carer's Leave Act 2023 in our [Update on Hybrid and Flexible Working \(2025\) report](#). Since the introduction of the Carer's Leave Act 2023 in April 2024, just 15% say they have seen an increase in requests for time off to manage caring responsibilities, raising questions about employee awareness or affordability of the unpaid leave.

From an affordability perspective, we know that working carers often have to reduce their hours to enable them to fulfil their caring responsibilities and that many have had to remortgage or take out loans to cover the cost of the care they provide ([Carers Week report, 2025](#)). [Centre for Care analysis](#) that carefully isolates the causal impact on income of becoming a carer role finds that caring results in a lower income for carers when compared to non-carers. The gap widens over time and with higher intensity caring.

Our [own research with Sheffield University](#) also shows that carers point to paid leave as the most helpful way of supporting them with their caring responsibilities.

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

There was a general consensus by roundtable respondents that if paid carers leave was introduced, that evidence would need to be provided - some kind of certification by a relevant professional to prevent potential for abuse.

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

Five days would be appropriate and reasonable for a potential paid entitlement and would align with the existing provision for 5 days unpaid leave, per year.

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

We believe that the baseline level of pay should be at 90% of pay to support affordability to take the leave.

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

It would ensure that the leave was more affordable and would support retention. From an affordability perspective, we know that working carers often have to reduce their hours to enable them to fulfil their caring responsibilities and that many have had to remortgage or take out loans to cover the cost of the care they provide ([Carers Week report, 2025](#)).

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

Recent [comparative analysis by the Centre of Care](#), of paid and unpaid carers leave in countries across the world has highlighted that the UK lags behind many nations by not providing paid carer's leave. Countries across Europe, North America and Asia offer both short- and much longer-term paid carers leave, often exceeding 10 days a year. Analysis has highlighted that when comparing paid and unpaid carer's leave schemes in other countries, those that are paid positively influence continued labour market participation, which is not the case for unpaid leave. Evidence also suggests the costs of paid carers leave are likely to be offset by savings elsewhere in the care systems: for example, in California the introduction of paid carer's leave led to a relative decline of over 11% in the proportion of the state's population of older people (age 65+) residing in a nursing home.

However, in the current environment, concerns were expressed by focus group respondents about cost controls and burdens on employers. Even with a statutory entitlement, there are also costs around the administration of this that need to be acknowledged.

That said, in a Summer 2026 CIPD Member poll, 91% of respondents said that in principle they would support the introduction of up to 5 days statutory paid leave for Carers, with just 5% saying they wouldn't. This confirms that even in the current challenging climate, HR professionals believe paid carers leave should be a priority and would support the government's aim of retention.

Given that organisations are navigating many changes through the Employment Rights Act (2025), it would likely be beneficial to delay the introduction of any new rights for unpaid carers to after the ERA (2025) changes have been properly implemented and embedded.

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

Across the UK, nearly 3 million unpaid carers are working in paid employment. At the same time, [Carers UK](#) found that 2.6 million people have given up work to care - that's 600 people a day.

While all the objectives listed have merit, we think in the current challenging climate the focus should be on 'reducing the risk of carers leaving work due to caring responsibilities.'

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

Out of the suggested policy changes, we believe that paid carers' leave of 5 days per year would best address the objective of reducing the risk of carers leaving work due to caring responsibilities.

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



We believe that paid carers' leave of 5 days per year would help employers and carers balance work and care. However, in addition, holistic support is needed including line manager education, access to flexible working and government support and guidance for both carers and employers.

## **Parents of seriously ill children**

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

Our roundtable respondents had little awareness of the support available to parents of seriously ill children. As one respondent said: "I'm not really aware of what support is available for parents in that terrible situation."

This suggests that specific guidance on this would be helpful for both the parents affected themselves and for employers to help them understand what broader support they might be able to provide.

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

A paid leave entitlement is likely to be helpful for parents of seriously ill children. These situations often arise suddenly, involve medical intervention, and may require sustained parental presence. As outlined in this consultation, this can create immediate and significant disruption to work and family life.

Some, but not all of our roundtable respondents were supportive of a paid leave entitlement for parents of seriously ill children. One respondent said that they had used 'compassionate leave in the absence in this space - as the situation unfolded.' Another suggested that it could follow a similar line to neonatal leave principles.

However, others felt that it should be leave for seriously ill dependants - to pick up older dependants and younger dependants. As one respondent said: "I'm concerned that having separate leave for seriously ill children may be complicating things. Also is it fair, is a seriously ill child more important than a spouse? What if it's your spouse and you have children to also look after?"

### ***38. If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, how should we define "serious illness"?***

This was not a question our HR roundtable respondents could easily respond to and would require further careful consultation, potentially with medical and legal professionals if this provision was introduced in the future.

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

This would depend on the agreed definition of serious illness, but we would anticipate that parents or primary carers of seriously ill children would be eligible if this entitlement was introduced.

### ***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?***

There was a general consensus by HR roundtable respondents that if paid leave for seriously ill children was introduced, evidence would need to be provided - some kind of certification by a relevant medical professional, for example.

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



Again, this is a difficult question to respond to as every situation will be different, as one respondent at our HR roundtable suggested:

“It’s really difficult to put timeframes in for this because every situation is different. You have to allow business to build it out and provide further support fairly across all employees.”

A period of up to 4 weeks statutory paid leave was suggested as a reasonable period of paid leave to support working families in these specific difficult circumstances. Some felt that this could then be reviewed to see what further support the organisation might be able to provide through other provisions such as unpaid leave and flexible working.

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

If paid leave for parents of seriously ill children was introduced, the baseline level of pay should be at 90% to support affordability to take the leave.

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

Most of our roundtable respondents were unsure of the support available to parents of seriously ill children so first and foremost practical guidance for employers on how to support parents of seriously ill children would be very helpful.

A shorter, statutory paid period of time away from work to provide financial support in the immediate aftermath of the illness might also be helpful, although there wasn’t a consensus from all our roundtable respondents on whether this would be affordable to businesses in the current difficult climate.

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

Introducing a period of paid leave for parents of seriously ill children would help support parents in the immediate aftermath of the illness, which might also include a period of medical intervention, diagnosis and support.

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

It is a challenging time for businesses in the current environment, and any new provisions need to be introduced in a way that is workable, proportionate, and mindful of the pressures on employers, particularly small and micro-businesses.

If leave is introduced, organisations will need to think about potential cover for that person’s role, although this will be more manageable if it is for a shorter period.

There are also concerns about cost controls and burdens on employers - as one respondent said: “Even with a statutory entitlement employers often have to pay a contribution and there are also hidden costs around the administration of this.”



**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?**

**1. Pressure on organisations**

It is worth re-emphasising that it is a challenging time for businesses in the current environment, and any new provisions need to be introduced in a way that is workable, proportionate, and mindful of the pressures on employers, particularly medium, small and micro-businesses.

**2. Timings**

Given that organisations are navigating several changes through the Employment Rights Act (2025), it would likely be beneficial to delay the introduction of any new rights for unpaid carers to after the ERA (2025) changes have been properly implemented and embedded.

**3. Clarity of legislation**

Any new rights introduced for unpaid carers in the future need to be clear and communicated well. As one roundtable respondent said: “We need clear legislation - because unclear legislation leads to confusion all round.”

**4. Importance of education and guidance**

In our online roundtable with HR professionals, it was felt that more guidance was needed from the Government on who constitutes a carer and how to support carers in a holistic way - this should not just cover leave but also include flexible working and other policies to help retain unpaid carers. Practical case studies covering examples of different caring responsibilities across a range of different sectors and sized organisations would be very helpful.

Our roundtable respondents felt that guidance should reinforce the importance of unpaid carers working in partnership with their organisations and providing notice of leave where they were able to do so.

There was also a suggestion that the development of a hub for carers on gov.uk would be beneficial. This could include carers support, financial wellbeing resources, employee rights, guidance on leave and local and regional support.

Specific guidance for both employers and unpaid carers themselves in particularly challenging situations (including parents caring for seriously ill children) would be educational and helpful, particularly if it included practical pointers around the types of employer support that could be helpful.

**5. Gap in provision for self-employed unpaid carers**

Finally, the gap in provision for self-employed unpaid carers was raised in our roundtable. Someone working in construction flagged that they have a lot of self-employed contractors working for them and there is no carers’ leave provision for the self-employed. They think this represents a gap: “On statutory provisions self-employed are often missed out.”