

Department for Business and Trade
Employment Rights Directorate
Old Admiralty Building
Admiralty Place
London
SW1A 2DY

Tuesday, 01 September 2026

Dear Unpaid Carers Policy Team,

Re: Make Work Pay consultation on employment rights for unpaid carers

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Age UK strongly supports further action to help unpaid carers balance work and caring responsibilities. As the State Pension age rises and people spend longer in the labour market, it is increasingly important that workers are not forced to choose between remaining in employment and providing care for a loved one. Having to leave work means missing out on income, pension contributions, and often the sense of identity that comes from working.

We support the introduction of paid Carer's Leave. The current entitlement to one week of unpaid leave was an important first step, but for many carers it is simply unaffordable to use. We believe the Government should immediately introduce five days of paid Carer's Leave, while giving consideration to extending this over the medium-term to 10 days per year.

Evidence from Age UK's research highlights why action is needed. In our 2016 report 'Walking the tightrope: the challenges of combining work and care in later life', we found that caring has a statistically significant negative impact on their ability to stay in work from as little as five hours of care per week. Carers providing 10 hours or more experience significant detriment to their employment prospects. These findings underline how even relatively modest caring responsibilities can make it much harder to stay in work.

We also strongly welcome the proposal to strengthen support for carers who need to step away from employment during periods of particularly intensive caring. This includes both extending the current entitlement to unpaid Carer's Leave and introducing a statutory "right to return" to work following a longer period of absence. In Age UK's research, carers frequently described reaching a point where balancing work and caring became unsustainable, but many were

Age UK
7th Floor
One America Square
17 Crosswall
London EC3N 2LB

t 0800 169 87 87
f 020 3033 1000
e contact@ageuk.org.uk
www.ageuk.org.uk

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reluctant to leave work permanently because of the long-term consequences for their finances, pension saving and future employment prospects. The ability to take a longer period of leave, coupled with confidence that they can return to employment afterwards, would provide valuable security and help prevent unnecessary and permanent exits from the labour market. The importance of stronger protections and support for carers during these periods of transition emerged as a clear theme in our research.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Brooks

Head of Policy
Age UK

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