

The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
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Dear Liam,

Implementing the Employment Rights Act: June Consultations on Employment Rights for Unpaid Carers, Time off for Public Duties and Government responses

Once implemented, the Employment Rights Act will raise the minimum floor of employment rights, raise living standards across the country and level the playing field for those businesses who are engaged in good practices. There are clear, evidence-based benefits of government action through the Act. Not acting would mean a continuation of the current issues within the labour market: poor working conditions, proliferation of insecure work, growing inequalities, and fractious industrial relations.

Over 18 million employees will benefit from new protections, but it will be those who are lowest paid in the labour market, in sectors such as social care, hospitality and retail, that will benefit most. Our analysis, using UK and international evidence alongside economic modelling, finds that the Act will help boost employment, improve job quality and productivity, while having a positive direct impact on economic growth.

Our latest delivery timelines demonstrate this Government's commitment to delivering these reforms at pace, whilst giving businesses and workers time to get ready. April 2026 saw the delivery of significant changes which workers will now benefit from, including:

- strengthened rights to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), including expanding eligibility to up to 1.3 million of the most vulnerable workers who previously earned below the lower earnings limit and making it available from the first day of illness rather than the fourth day, meaning workers do not need to choose between working and getting better, improving workplace productivity and reducing the spread of infections in the workplace.
- the introduction of day one rights to Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave, ensuring new parents are able to spend time with their families.
- the launch of the Fair Work Agency, a new body which brings together the patchwork of state enforcement of workers right in one place, with plans to further expand its remit.

This week the Government will publish two consultations to continue our work in delivering these changes for all. Further details are outlined below. Today we are publishing a consultation on the employment rights of unpaid carers, and on 12th June a consultation on time off for public duties

Consultation 1: Unpaid Carers

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting their loved ones, and this Government recognises the enormous contribution they make to their families and communities, and to wider society. We are aware that too many unpaid carers struggle to combine work with their caring responsibilities. In the Plan to Make Work Pay, we committed to reviewing the implementation of the Carer's Leave Act and examining the benefits of paid Carer's Leave, while being mindful of the impacts on businesses. We set this out in more detail in November 2025 through our terms of reference for the review of employment rights for unpaid carers.

To build on the work of the review so far, we are launching a consultation which seeks views on whether there is more that government should do. It considers several approaches such as improvements to guidance and communications and new statutory leave entitlements for unpaid carers. It also asks questions on support for parents of seriously ill children in recognition of the acute challenges that arise for families following a diagnosis of serious or life-threatening illness during childhood, as we committed to do during the passage of the Employment Rights Act.

We will analyse all consultation responses and wider evidence as part of the ongoing review before deciding whether any further interventions are needed.

This consultation will be open for 12 weeks, closing on 4 September 2026.

Consultation 2: Time Off for Public Duties

The Employment Rights Act 2025 set out the Government's commitment to reviewing the list of public duties in section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 for which individuals are entitled to time off work, with consideration of special constables. The aim of the review was to ensure the list of public bodies and offices individuals can take time off work to undertake remains fit for purpose and continues to support the effective functioning of modern public services.

The review found that the list of public duties would benefit from updates to reflect changes to public services, governance structures and devolution arrangements. The list also places insufficient emphasis on locally rooted roles linked to community governance and representation. Therefore, these targeted changes are proposed to modernise the entitlement:

- Special constables should be entitled to time off under these provisions;
- People carrying out eligible public duties with a clear local focus should gain the right to reasonable time off; and
- People carrying out public duties for certain national public sector organisations should no longer be entitled to time off work.

Insights drawn from the consultation will help shape the future of this important entitlement and possible legislative changes, ensuring it continues to serve the public interest.

This consultation will be open for 12 weeks, closing on 1 September 2026.

Next Steps for consultation

This package of consultations sets out the next steps in delivering our plans. They are critical to shaping the practical implementation of this legislation, helping the Government to deliver reforms that are both effective and inclusive. It is in everyone's interest to get the relationship between employer and worker right. These consultations will help us make work pay for both. The government has further plans for both consultation and the release of government responses over the coming months and will continue to update Parliament appropriately.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Dearden." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Dearden MP
Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection
Department for Business and Trade