



Government Consultation and Changes

What's new?

There are some recent developments to make you aware of in terms of government consultation on zero-hours contracts and rights for unpaid carers and parents of seriously ill children, and trade union access rights.

1. Government Consultation

a. Zero Hours Contracts

The Government has launched a consultation on draft regulations to implement zero-hours reforms focusing on guaranteed hours, reasonable notice of shifts, and compensation for short-notice changes.

Proposals include a right for eligible workers (likely those on low or zero-hours contracts who regularly exceed contracted hours) to be offered guaranteed hours based on a 12-week reference period. Employers would also need to provide reasonable notice of shifts, potentially one to four weeks, to avoid tribunal claims.

Additionally, workers may be entitled to payments for shifts cancelled, moved, or shortened at 'short notice' which could be between one and seven days.

Consultation closes on 25th August 2026. Should you wish to give feedback the link to further details and the online form is at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/make-work-pay-ending-one-sided-flexibility-reforms-of-zero-hours-and-similar-contracts>

b. Carer's Leave

The Government has launched consultation on potential reforms aimed at strengthening workplace protections for unpaid carers and parents of seriously ill children. Currently employees can take up to five days of unpaid carer's leave each year and views are being sought on whether;

- a. the current the entitlement should be increased?
- b. employees should have greater flexibility in how leave can be taken?
- c. the current eligibility framework remains appropriate?
- d. there should be an extension of the existing entitlement to unpaid carer's leave by introducing a statutory 'right to return to work' after a long period of unpaid leave?
- e. there should be the introduction of a statutory paid carer's leave entitlement?
- f. there should be a one-off period of paid leave for parents of seriously ill children?



Consultation closes on 1st September 2026. Should you wish to give feedback the link to further details and the online form is at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/make-work-pay-employment-rights-for-unpaid-carers-and-parents-of-seriously-ill-children>

2. Trade Union Access

Currently, Trade Unions do not have a general, independent right of access to workplaces; they can only exercise their duties through individual members in a workplace or where they have voluntary access arrangements with an employer.

From October 2026, there will be a statutory framework for employers with 21 workers or more to allow Trade Unions access to the workplace, even where no union is currently recognised. Trade Unions will no longer need employer consent in most cases and they can follow a formal legal process to request access which can be both physical and digital, although private dwellings are excluded.

Smaller employers (less than 21 workers) will be exempt from this statutory right.

What do I need to do?

Familiarise yourself with the above changes and consider how these will impact your business and whether your policies and procedures may need to be amended.

Do get in touch should you require assistance in navigating the above changes, via telephone on Tel: 0116 216 9224 - Option 4 (HR) Option 1 / 07904 151008 or email jacqui@greensconsultancy.co.uk