





# About Age UK



responsibility, while as little as five hours caring per week to stay in work. Ten hours and over creates a significant impediment to working.<sup>iv</sup>

Flexible working is an important enabler for carers to stay in work, and since its introduction in 2003 the Right to Request has allowed many carers to ask for greater flexibility, and has helped many people stay in work. When conducting the research for our report conducted focus groups of carers. The report summed up the findings on flexible working:

*In our focus groups some carers reported fears that their employer would disadvantage them if they were to request flexible working, and fear that their reputation would be damaged by doing so. This was particularly true of people working in sectors such as manufacturing, where there was a perception that they would be perceived and could end up being forced out.*<sup>v</sup>

Following the pandemic and the increasing pressures on the social care system, using flexible working as a tool to help carers manage their responsibilities while continuing in work has never been so important.

**Q14 Do you agree that employers should be required to show that they have considered alternatives to the request?**



**Q24 If the Right to Request flexible working were amended to reduce the time period within which employers must respond to a request, how long should employers have to respond?**

**Q25 Please give reasons for your answer, including any consideration about costs, benefits and practicalities.**

We believe the system should be flexible to allow employers the chance to give due consideration to requests (and to consider alternative arrangements as per the BEIS proposals), while allowing individuals to get their answer in a reasonable timeframe. This is likely to be different in different situations, meaning that a one-size-fits all approach is not necessarily the best solution.

Given many employees might make a request in an emergency situation, or have changing needs over time, we consider three months to be a lengthy waiting period. BEIS should carefully examine alternative solutions, such as a one month waiting period or  
it up.

There could also be differences between the capability of larger and smaller employers to respond to requests, so procedural differences could also be considered here.

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<sup>i</sup> Available at [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb_sept12_a_means_to_many_ends_older_workers_experiences_of_flexible_working.pdf)

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<sup>ii</sup> McKinsey (2015) <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>

<sup>iii</sup> [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb_sept12_a_means_to_many_ends_older_workers_experiences_of_flexible_working.pdf)

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<sup>iv</sup> Age UK (2016), 'Walking the tightrope: the challenges of combining work and care in later life'. Available at [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb\\_july16\\_walking\\_the\\_tightrope.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb_july16_walking_the_tightrope.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb\\_july16\\_walking\\_the\\_tightrope.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/active-communities/rb_july16_walking_the_tightrope.pdf)