

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

Migrant staff

Migrant staff deserve nothing but respect and dignity for coming to look after those who need care the most.



Migrant care staff in UK 'exploited and harassed' by employers, says UNISON

Migrant staff coming to the UK to take up jobs in social care are being forced to pay back thousands of pounds in fees, housed in sub-standard accommodation and even forced to share beds with colleagues.

Contacting Derbyshire UNISON

01629 582266

branch@unisondc.co.uk

derbyshireunison.com



To highlight this appalling treatment, the union has written to care minister Helen Whately warning of a 'significant rise' in reports of unacceptable treatment by unscrupulous employers towards workers from overseas.

In the letter, UNISON says the exploitation and 'shocking abuse' faced by skilled migrant workers - 58,000 of whom came

to the UK to work in the care sector in the 12 months to March - can include huge charges to pay back 'relocation costs' if they wish to change jobs.

Social care employers often demand migrants pay large fees of up to £15,000 upfront for finding them a job and housing in the UK. But many end up in poor accommodation, then have rent

deducted from their wages, according to the union.

The letter details one case where a care home employer chased a nurse for £14,000 after she resigned. The employee had raised concerns over exploitative treatment and standards of care.

Some have been paid for just a fraction of the hours they have worked or subjected to racist remarks, harassment, and intimidation if they complain about the treatment of the people they care for.

Others have worked for several months without being paid by their employers, who claim this is to recoup fees towards the cost of the migrant workers' training or accommodation.

Care staff have told UNISON they're expected to share bedrooms and, in some cases, even beds. They are also directed by their employers not to discuss the circumstances of how they came to be in the UK with anyone.

In the letter, UNISON says: "Sadly, this is inevitable in a sector that is built on poor terms and conditions for all care workers, including poverty wages, no proper sick pay, failure to pay for travel time and zero-hours contracts."

The letter acknowledges the Prime Minister's recent rejection of calls to scale back the visa route for social care, saying that this is "a tacit acknowledgment of how much these workers are doing to prop up a system in crisis. These workers deserve our praise, thanks, and good working conditions, not the outright exploitation many are facing."

It continues: "Care worker ill-treatment is rife, irrespective of migration status. But unscrupulous employers have greater powers over migrant care workers, which leads to the most extreme and disgraceful practices."

UNISON says in the letter that the problem is 'systemic', migrant workers 'deserve to be treated with dignity and respect in compliance with UK employment law', and the government has 'a responsibility to intervene'.

This would "ensure the fair treatment of migrant workers who have come to help

provide a vital public service", the letter adds.

UNISON general secretary Christina

McAnea said: "The government must stop unscrupulous care employers from luring overseas workers under false pretences, only to then exploit and harass them.

"These practices have no place in a modern society. Migrant staff deserve nothing but respect and dignity for coming to look after those who need care the most. This makes the case for why a national care service, that mirrors the NHS, is needed so urgently."