

GMCA WLT Report – UNISON Migrant Care Workers’ Charter

12th November 2025

Appendix 2 – UNISON Member Testimonies

The following testimonies have been provided anonymously by UNISON members in Greater Manchester, all of whom are care workers who have moved to the UK to work in the city region from abroad.

The workers who have provided testimony have been engaged in the development of the UNISON Migrant Care Worker Charter and a list of proposed measures which members feel could improve the working lives of migrant staff working in our NHS. Both of these documents have been shared alongside these testimonies, and are also available from James Bull, UNISON Regional Organiser (j.bull@unison.co.uk).

We are keen to make progress in agreeing the rollout of the Migrant Care Workers’ Charter across Greater Manchester Local Authorities, and to identify ways in which proposals put forward by trades union members to improve the working lives of migrant staff in the NHS can be realised.

Testimony 1 – Social Care (Residential/Nursing Home)

Today it is over a year since I arrived in the UK.

I came into the UK after paying £5000 acclimated admin charges as Senior Support Worker under Skilled worker visa. I arrived in UK, linked up with my sponsor and realised no job from him.

My sponsor suggested that we look for 20hrs job for sustainability, he added if this can't be sufficient for our sustainability, we should look for job that would be paying by hand so that we send money to him as rent, he would pay our tax and NI and return the balance on a payslip as if we've worked for the month.

This so called sponsor still went ahead and lied to the home office that we stopped working for him and home office wrote a letter of curtailment which gives 60days.

The most disgusting thing about this modern day slavery is after sabotaging the skilled worker visa by having to pay under the pretence of admin charges, migrants are subject of discrimination because you can't find another employer who would be willing to employ you because your visa would clearly shows that you are meant to be working for someone else. Till date, getting employed has been the greatest challenge, remember migrant don't have

recourse to public fund, how does the system expect them to pay their bills? Till date, I've been struggling to get employment or absorbed by another employer. I'm bankrupt as we speak as I keep borrowing money and owing bills.

Bringing this up or fighting it was so difficult because we had been threatened to be sent back by home office if we report meanwhile, he had already taken his money which makes it clear we've been duped and subjected to human afflicted poverty and suffering.

Testimony 2 – Social Care (Domiciliary Care)

Coming to the United Kingdom was the happiest moment of my life a chance to care for the elderly, do the work I love, and provide a brighter future for my family.

But that joy has turned into a relentless nightmare. My employer's license was revoked, and now I am trapped in fear and uncertainty, with the threat of deportation hanging over me, my wife, and my one-year-old son, who turned one this year.

I have done everything I can to find another sponsor, but no matter how qualified I am or how much experience I have, I am repeatedly rejected. Employers with sponsorship licenses refuse to offer me a chance, yet they bring other workers from overseas. The moment I mention I need sponsorship, interviews are cancelled, or job offers are withdrawn while some employers will say they do not have the funds to sponsor or they do not wish to take over any sponsorship.

I sometimes wonder if it's because of my skin colour or because of the government's restrictive policies. The new laws targeting care workers like me have made an already difficult situation almost impossible. It feels as if our sacrifices—the endless hours caring for the vulnerable—mean nothing.

I work only 20 hours a week because of visa restrictions, and it's not enough to provide for my family. My wife and I often go to bed hungry so that our baby boy has enough to eat. We can't access public funds, so every day is a struggle just to keep a roof over our heads. I have used up all my savings trying to survive paying council tax, keeping the heater on for my baby, and there is nothing left to go back to in the country I moved to the UK from. The thought of deportation terrifies me.

My son would not survive the insecurity, lack of healthcare, and poor living conditions waiting there as there is nothing to go back to and no house to go to. The fear of losing him haunts me constantly.

Despite my own struggles, I volunteer at a community centre, helping the homeless. I show up every day with a smile, bringing hope to others because I care deeply for people and want to

see them happy. But no one knows the pain I carry inside. I cry myself to sleep at night, consumed by shame and fear, knowing I can't provide for my family. I have even started having suicidal thoughts, overwhelmed by the hopelessness of my situation. It feels like I am drowning, and no one sees me.

I have dedicated my life to caring for others, sacrificing so much time to ensure the elderly in this country feel loved and safe. Yet, my family and I are forced to endure trauma, rejection, and uncertainty. We shouldn't have to go through this, not after all the care and support I provide.

I am pleading for help to secure a new sponsorship that would allow me to work full-time, provide for my family, and protect us from the fear of deportation. This is not just about me, it is about saving my family from tragedy, ensuring my son has the chance to grow up safe, loved, and in a stable environment

Testimony 3 – Social Care (Domiciliary Care)

My husband and I were defrauded of £9,000 by an agency in Wales.

In February 2024, we paid this amount for a Certificate of Sponsorship (COS) with my resumption date stated for April. I had to travel from Greater Manchester to Wales to pick up shifts, but on several occasions, my shifts were cancelled upon arrival without prior notice, and attempts to pick up other shifts proved futile. I would have to travel back to Greater Manchester after working once or twice in seven days of squatting with friends in Wales. I had barely worked for two months when we found out the agency's license was revoked (May 2024). The company promised to assist us with another company that would sponsor and informed us he had sought legal advice. Instead, he abruptly terminated the contract of every one of his sponsored staff. Till date, no refund has been made, neither has any sponsor been provided.

Since then, securing a new sponsor has been very difficult due to the restrictions on my visa, which limits me to working no more than 20 hours outside the company that sponsored me. We live in constant fear, knowing that the Home Office could issue a curtailment letter instructing us to leave the country if we cannot get a new sponsor.

We are earnestly pleading for a chance to find a company willing to offer sponsorship. Currently, Bolton Cares, where I work as a bank staff does not provide sponsorship. Your support in this matter would mean a lot, as we do not want to find ourselves stranded or sent back home. Thank you for your understanding.

Testimony 4 – Social Care (Domiciliary Care)

I arrived with my family with greater dreams, but unfortunately, when I started my job on a regular basis I was shocked and it literally ruined all my dreams as my employer and the management exploited me and they kept me in the situation of modern slavery.

The company management imposed the shift morning 7 till 10.30 at night some time without any break and some time there were unnecessary long breaks, six days a week without my willingness or without any consent they imposed or removed the shift as per their convenience. If issues raised then uneven rota was imposed to trouble more and interestingly, when I was sick and was unable to do my shift, so I requested my care co-ordinator about my sickness but she was not removing my shift and she forced me to finish the shift while I was sick and still she forced me to send a picture of where I have done sick in the street, which is totally not acceptable and it impacted me mentally.

My employer breached each and every rule and regulations but I can't make any complaints as I was on a sponsorship visa. When I raised concerns regarding my social life or anything they just threatened to cancel the sponsorship or trouble me through uneven rotas.

I had a car accident which I strongly believe that it was just because of mental stress due to constant exploitation but was helpless as a sponsored worker afraid of losing the sponsorship.

The most shocking thing was my employer was deducting money from my wages every month by not paying me for the hours done and instead was paid for the contracted hours which means I was not paid almost 30 to 50 hrs less. When I asked them for the reason the director of the company literally told me that you have to give us a favour for the rest of the hours.

Last February 2024 when I refused to work for a favour they described, my refusal was given a name of verbal resignation and they forcefully removed me from my job. I can't sleep over the night for many days, which was affecting mentally and impacting my social life as well. They deducted the amount from my last salary they paid saying it is due to you signed the contracts. Finally, I decided to fight for my rights and job, I contacted UNISON and ACAS.

After a long legal battle with the employer he agreed to give my job back after around 4 months.

My journey was still continuing with the company but I don't know how long as they are still trying their best to frame me at any cost to remove me from the job, which is ridiculous as I am trying my best for the service users but always afraid of losing my job due to company constantly using tricks to frame me.

Testimony 5 – Social Care (Domiciliary Care)

I came into the UK May 2023, with my family under a skilled worker visa sponsorship i secured while in my country after series of interviews i was subjected to by the company. All went successfully and Certificate of Sponsorship issued by Home Office then my visa was granted alongside my family.

We got into the UK on a Saturday, got into my supposed office address I have known, lo and behold no one was there rather I was told from the reception that it's a long time they moved. I rang my office to inform them but they said I should not worry as everything will be sorted out remotely.

Trainings commenced, online and face to face. Months went- by after trainings, job didn't come forth but fortunately after a tough persuasion and disturbances I gave my employer I was asked to resume work. 10 months into the job, their license was revoked and the job stopped.

I had been told about UNISON by one of my training tutors who advised that as care workers we must not fail to belong to a union as there are so many injustices going on in the sector. So she mentioned very few of which UNISON was one of them. I googled it as I got home, registered and became very active taking part in trainings and meetings.

So when my company's issues came up and we were discharged in an inhumane manner, I quickly called upon NW officials who immediately delved into the case.

Today myself and some of my former colleagues have been able to secure another sponsorship through UNISON who took our case to Salford Council in collaboration with a care company in Salford to sponsor us. Also through the union we have been able to get some of denied benefits paid to us from the company and many more outstandings to be received soonest.

Testimony provided to Members of Parliament

Workers from across the region shared testimony in the regional meeting called with MPs in August 2025. A care worker from Pakistan working in domiciliary care in Bolton spoke about her experience of being exploited by her employer “They forced me to do extra work. Some weeks I was doing up to 85 hours a week. I became very sick and when I told them I was sick they threatened to cancel my visa”.

A support worker based in Salford talked about his experience of being victimised and targeted because he was one of a few migrant staff that weren't afraid of standing up to the employer.

A carer from Zimbabwe speaks about the differential treatment she receives as a migrant worker – “They don’t pay us properly, one month you will get full pay the next no pay. Our pension provider has also written to us to let us know our employer is not paying our money into our pension. They make two payslips, one for us and one for home office.” “When you want to take leave they make you take leave that suits them, which especially cruel given so many of our families are back home, meaning we can’t arrange to see them. When we need references to work for other employers they refuse to give them.”.

A carer from Nigeria working in Greater Manchester shared the mental strain of the treatment they face at work – “When issues arise because of the poor working conditions, staff are made to bear the blame without the right to explain, and contracts are terminated immediately with no investigation. A lot of us have started developing medical conditions — mental health issues, high blood pressure — because of the everyday stress. And we cannot leave, because we are tied to them. They use this power to deny us our basic human rights”.