

Black and Migrant Workers on the front line..... UNISON B&MW bulletin

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1. BAME more vulnerable to COVID

All our members have been on the front line since the start of the pandemic.

We are however particularly concerned by the disproportionate impact of the Covid crisis on Black and Migrant Workers. Emerging evidence from around the world is showing that Covid-19 is disproportionately affecting BAME communities, particularly BAME workers in health and social care.

Evidence in England suggests that BAME people can be up to twice as likely to die from Covid-19 than white people, and that BAME people are most likely to be diagnosed with Covid-19.

Times article:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ethnic-minorities-face-higher-virus-death-risk-q8zpd3gsq?shareToken=19d1f2cd511e064cde46926692c86614>

Covid-19 and the Impact on BAME communities - What needs to change?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmliluf3NEI&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1ziY8mJz30BtocJ891vuWx83ir7aPIOJI3vmKH7V7HmnPLqAPM16cd5BU>

UNISON seminar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuuG6mTPwHc&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR3zafDGsmq0jfiYTONMU8Cd-PuuotqFZAvCPMqoie70caUYbYsFVohINGY>

This means that being from a BAME background needs to be taken into consideration when carrying out risk assessments. As this was not included when initial workplace screenings took place or when people initially contacted their GP to get shielding letters, **new risk assessments need to be offered to all BAME staff with concerns and / or underlying health conditions urgently!**

We have been in touch with the Department of Health / PHA and the Trusts on this issue. Some Health Trusts have already taken steps to approach their BAME staff.

This needs to happen everywhere immediately – including for staff employed by private sector employers.

To help us continue to lobby on this issue **we need to hear from you.** We need to know more **about how it is affecting you in Northern Ireland** so we can put pressure on your employers to take steps to protect you.

Please email back with the answers to the questions below and / or your story if you are still working on the front line despite underlying health conditions, to Nathalie: n.donnelly@unison.co.uk.

- **Have you been approached by your employer / manager to ask if you had any health and safety concerns?**
- **Have you been offered a new risk assessment?**
- **Have you been offered any further protective measures (e.g. redeployment to a lower risk area / specific PPE)**
- **Did you ask for a shielding letter from your GP?**

2. Private sector staff and the impact of SSP

Our members working in care homes have struggled over the past few months. When off sick, or having to isolate, they would almost all be sent home on less than £100 a week.

This was clearly a major issue for all staff, however this once again had a **disproportionate impact on migrant workers**. Many of our migrant worker members came here to work in the health sector and this often means that both adults work in care homes. If one gets sick, the other needs to stop work to ensure they don't spread the virus to their own nursing home. This means that in many cases to the entire family's income has been suspended.

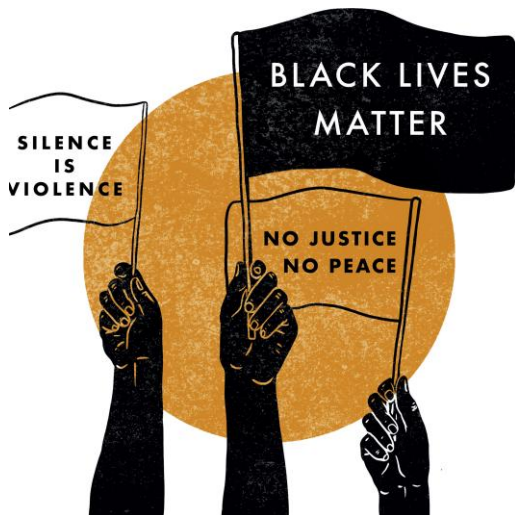
After weeks of bargaining, UNISON were delighted to hear the Health Minister announce a package for care homes this week that would include funding to pay **80% of staff's salary when they are off sick or isolating from Covid.**

Questions remain, not least of which how far will it be backdated? But we are delighted that something is finally put in place to support our members still struggling in care homes!

UNISON press release:

<https://www.unison-ni.org.uk/unison-welcomes-sick-pay-announcement-step-right-direction-further-action-required>

3. Black lives matter.



“The murder of George Floyd is another example of the racism that blights US society. There are those who would claim that the situation in the UK is different, but that’s not true.

Last year, the UK Independent Office for Police Conduct recorded a total of 276 deaths during or following police contact. Black people are overrepresented in cases including use of police force.

Racism, in all its forms, remains a part of our society. It exists when Black workers get paid less than someone else doing the same job or when they’re passed over for jobs that similarly or less qualified colleagues are appointed to. It exists when you’re more likely to be fined for breaching Coronavirus restrictions if you’re Black. And it exists too in the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black communities.

The current situation in America is horrifying, but sadly it is not surprising, nor is it unique to America.

That is why we all have to commit ourselves to be actively anti-racist in our attitudes and our behaviours. I am proud that UNISON has always been at the forefront of anti-racist and anti-fascist campaigns since our union’s earliest days.

Honouring the memory of George Floyd – and so many others – demands that we recommit ourselves to the fight against racism in all its forms. And I promise, your union will continue to play a leading role.”

David Prentis (UNISON General Secretary)

Also see : [Black Lives Matter; Black Members Matter](#) on the UNISON webpage.

As you are likely aware, on Saturday, **Black Lives Matter (BLM) rallies took place in both Derry and Belfast**, at which some of the protesters were issued with fines by the PSNI. The Committee on The Administration of Justice (CAJ) would like to hear from you if you are in that situation:

“CAJ is concerned about the proportionality of the policing response and reports of racial profiling. We are keen to gather together firsthand accounts of the police response and how these fines were administered from groups and individuals who were present.

If you think you or your organisation might be able to help with this, please contact una@caj.org.uk.

Please note, CAJ does not engage in client work and is gathering these testimonies for research / policy purposes.”

4. Breakthrough on the health surcharge.

On a very positive note, we have finally witnessed a U turn on the health surcharge issue.

After announcing yet another increase in the amount migrants will have to pay per year for this disgraceful charge (£624 per year of visa from October!) the Prime Minister agreed to waive it for Health Care staff.

The fight is not over.... the health surcharge is wrong and needs to be abolished.

Please continue to [sign and share the petition to scrap the Health Surcharge for all!](#)

See [UNISON campaign](#) to scrap the surcharge

5. Immigration info updates

The law centre NI have put together a page with Covid-19 contingency provisions for immigration and refugee law in Northern Ireland.

This includes links for visa extensions, home office contact, etc.

See: https://lawcentreni.s3.amazonaws.com/Covid-19-Contingency-Provisions-for-immigration_090420.pdf

Please remember that you can also still access our immigration clinics, albeit online, by emailing Nathalie n.donnely@unison.co.uk or by using the JCWI helpline through the online UNISON Direct enquiries <https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/online-enquiries/>

For UNISON press release on the current Immigration Bill being push through Westminster see <https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2020/05/governments-treatment-migrant-workers-shameful/>

6. UNISON education programme:

And finally, don't forget our UNISON education courses are still up and running online.

See the new education programme on:

https://www.unison-ni.org.uk/sites/default/files/Unison%20Ed%20%20Prog%20%20Online_3.pdf

Or download our education app www.unisoncollegeni.org.uk