

UNISON NI B&MW e-bulletin (June 2024)

1. Join the UNISON Migrant Worker Network
2. Black and Migrant Worker group updates (Repayment Clauses / Different rates of pay / OET centre investigation / English criteria / Working through Agency)
3. Research and survey requests (ICTU - race discrimination in the workplace / TUC – sexual harassment)
4. UNISON College – education courses

1. UNISON Migrant Worker Network

The UNISON UK wide Migrant Worker Network is an informal network of UNISON members with a first-generation immigrant background including overseas and migrant workers, EU settled status workers and workers who have subsequently naturalised as British or Irish citizens or who have indefinite leave to remain.



Joining the network will enable UNISON to target advice, support, and information more effectively for migrant worker members. *UNISON will not share your information with any other organisation.*

The network has been growing in the last 12 months. Please register if you haven't already done so!

This is an important resource for information and updates, and **the network will host its first online information session on Monday 7th June at 7PM. (there is still time to join to get the invite – session includes getting active in UNISON; policy update; JCWI helpline and Q&A)**

[← PLEASE CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP TO UNISON'S MIGRANT WORKER NETWORK →](#)

2. Northern Ireland Black & Migrant Workers group updates

2.1 General activities

Our group has been busy on the ground with general UNISON events and information stalls for newly arrived international nurses.

We attended Black Members Conference in January this year in Brighton and continued to campaign to support our members affected by the consequences of ever more drastic immigration legislation.

We are planning to organise an online seminar on the latest **immigration changes and support needed for overseas staff in the private sector**.

Date to follow -keep an eye on our Facebook page and next e-bulletin!

Our group continues to meet monthly on zoom every first Thursday of the month. Anyone interested in getting involved, please email n.donnelly@unison.co.uk



2.2 Repayment clauses

We have come a long way in terms of fighting the abusive use of repayment clauses. Members have been able to claim money back, or stand firm when they were asked to repay items that should not be included. We have also helped members challenge abusive practices.

If you are affected by this, don't hesitate to get in touch with your branch or contact n.donnelly@unison.co.uk

2.3 Different rates of pay?

We have come across reports of employers putting OSCE nurses and local nurses with the same years of experience of two different pay scales.

If you are in that situation, we want to hear from you!

Please contact Nathalie n.donnelly@unison.co.uk

2.4 OET centre investigation

In recent months who have come across members who sat their OET exam in a OET centre that has since come under investigation. This can be very distressing for members who suddenly see their registration being questioned and are invited to provide further evidence.

If you are in this case or know colleagues in that situation, please make contact with UNISON so we can refer them to our Professional Service Unit.

2.5 English language criteria - OET / IELTS

We have been contacted by an increasing number of members who have worked here for over a year have tried to use alternative routes to prove their level of English.

Please note that this is only possible in very specific case and that **the general rule remains that you need to sit an English exam (IELTS or OET) to get on the NMC register**. Members who try to prove their English using an alternative route need to check that they fulfil all the criteria. Supporting information from employers (SIFE) can only use this alongside other forms of English language evidence and remains at the discretion of the employer.

For full advice see: [language-requirements-guidance.pdf \(nmc.org.uk\)](https://www.nmc.org.uk/language-requirements-guidance.pdf).

Also note that we continue to **provide free English classes for both IELTS and OET in the UNISON office to help people prepare for the exam.**

Classes are on every Thursday (**IELTS 10.30 to 12.30 / OET 1.30 to 3.30**) Contact n.donnelly@unison.co.uk to register.

Classes are also open to asylum seekers and refugees as part of UNISON's commitment to supporting inclusion.

2.6 Working through an agency

Some of our members continue to work solely through agency.

This means, in most cases, that they are not defined as 'employees' but as 'workers': an employee is someone who is hired to work a particular job, often for a set number of days and hours. A worker, has a more casual, less structured relationship with their workplace(s). **The distinction is important because many important rights –such as the right to claim unfair dismissal or maternity leave– depend on being an employee.**

Please remember that if you are working through an agency where you are free to accept or refuse shifts (but equality don't have to be given any specified number of hours), you are left very vulnerable when allegations are made against you. You might simply not get any further work.

We have members who have been without work for over a year for allegations they were not given an opportunity to challenge.

This can be a very high price to pay for a little more flexibility.

See further information:

[Employment status | nidirect](#)

[Basic employment rights at a glance.pdf \(Ira.org.uk\)](#)

3. Research and survey requests

ICTU research on race discrimination in the workplace

ICTU are carrying out research on worker experiences and trade union involvement in addressing discrimination in relation to handling complaints of racial discrimination with an employer, and in advocating for policies and procedures, with the aim of reducing interpersonal and institutional racism and to support inclusive workplaces.

The project would like to hear from both workers and union representatives, about their experiences in advocating for inclusion and equality for minority ethnic and/or migrant workers, and/or about making complaints related to racial discrimination of any kind.

Interviews will be conducted by Zoom and all interview material will be anonymised to ethically protect participant involvement.

A report summarising the findings, with recommendations for government, employers, and unions will be published later in the year.

For anyone interested in taking part, please contact David.carroll@ictu.ie

TUC survey on Black Women's experiences of sexual harassment

The TUC Black Women and Sexual Harassment Advisory Group working alongside Queen Mary University, has launched a survey to gather data on Black women's experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace.

[Survey on Black Women's experiences of sexual harassment.](#)

Please see [the TUC letter](#) which outlines who the survey is aimed at and further details of the project. **Deadline is 15 June.**

4. Education courses in UNISON

Make sure you take advantage of our very extensive range of education courses.

See our Padlet for list of courses: [Member learning \(padlet.com\)](#)

There are courses in our UNISON offices. (e.g. 'Managing Challenging Conversations' - 20th June). There is also a range of virtual courses or e-learning modules available on the Padlet.

To register for any of these courses please email educationni@unison.co.uk with the course name, your name and membership number if you know it.

***Do you have any colleagues
not in UNISON?***

Encourage them to join now for advice
and support in the workplace.

[Join UNISON Online](#)



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