

UNISON FOR SOCIAL CARE WORKERS

UNISON
Northern Ireland

MAY 2026

Time for the Real Living Wage is NOW! Time for a proper mileage rate is NOW!

UNISON members across Northern Ireland's social care sector have raised concerns about inadequate pay, the pressure of rising travel costs, and the urgent need for employers to recognise the true value of social care work.

They are coming together to demand a Real Living Wage and an appropriate mileage rate now. Crisis after crisis, they have kept services running; they are frustrated and feel that the value of their work is not recognised. Petrol prices have continued to rise, with some social care workers needing to borrow money to do their job because the 20p per mile allowance doesn't cover costs. UNISON members have collectively raised grievances with their employer, asking them to pay the Real Living Wage and a suitable mileage rate for the vital work they do.

If you would like more information or to get involved, click [here](#).



UNISON
**FAIR VISA
STORMONT RALLY**

END THE
EXPLOITATION
OF MIGRANT
WORKERS!

MONDAY 8TH JUNE, 1PM

In the summer of 2025, the government introduced proposals that significantly altered the pathway to Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) for skilled workers to 10 and 15 years, particularly impacting those in the health and social care sector who had come to the UK under clear expectations and a promise of settlement after 5 years of continuous service. These changes created uncertainty and were widely viewed as retrospective, undermining the original terms under which many migrant workers relocated, invested their resources, and built their lives in the UK.

- **Impact on Migrant Workers** - Plans to extend the qualifying period for settlement to up to 15 years—especially for roles unfairly labelled “low-skilled,” such as social care—would leave workers in prolonged uncertainty and vulnerability, increasing the risk of exploitation.
- **Threat to the Workforce** - These proposals could deepen workforce shortages and place further strain on already stretched public services, particularly in adult social care.
- **Call to the Home Office** - UNISON is calling for a pause and full impact assessments before any changes are introduced, as well as a firm commitment that new rules will not be applied retrospectively to families already settled in the UK.

**HAVE YOUR SAY - EMAIL YOUR MP TO SUPPORT
THE FAIR VISA CAMPAIGN TODAY!**



Immigration Advice:

UNISON gives you access to immigration advice – you can contact UNISON Direct 0800 0 857 857 for phone advice or contact Nathalie Donnelly to access our monthly face to face clinic : n.donnelly@unison.co.uk or message WhatsApp 07554433958

SALARY THRESHOLD REQUIREMENTS - CERTIFICATE OF SPONSORSHIP

We have been made aware of letters circulating regarding Home Office Changes - These letters can be misleading. Migrant workers on CoS have the same entitlement to sick leave/maternity leave as local workers. Being genuinely sick or having a baby does not mean you will lose your CoS!

See Home Office guidance to employers – April 2026:

You must normally stop sponsoring a worker if they are absent from work without pay, or absent on reduced pay, for more than 4 weeks in total according to their normal working pattern, during any calendar year (1 January to 31 December), **unless the absences are due to any of the following:**

- * Statutory maternity, paternity, parental, shared parental, adoption or neonatal care leave
- * Sick leave
- * Assisting with a national or international humanitarian or environmental crisis, with your agreement
- * Taking part in legally organised industrial action
- * Jury service
- * Attending court as a witness

The Northern Ireland Law Centre has a list of very useful guides on Employment Rights for Migrant Workers in the Health and Social Care Sector on their website: See <https://www.lawcentreni.org/migrant-healthcare-employment-guide/>



Do You Know Your Rights at Work?

Many members are unsure about their Rights at Work and may find themselves in difficult situations. If you have any concerns or are called to a meeting at work, it's important to speak with your UNISON representative. For the latest information or to obtain a copy of your "Know Your Rights at Work" booklet, please contact your UNISON representative or local branch.

There are also online "know your rights" sessions, and we would encourage all members working in private social care to join an online session. To find out more information, please contact - Angela Basnett a.basnett@unison.co.uk



Did you know that UNISON has an extensive Education Programme free for all our members? Whether it's preparing for NMC revalidation or NISCC registration, we have over 800 courses to choose from, there is something for everybody. Click on the link to the [UNISON College padlet](#).

To book any of our courses please email educationni@unison.co.uk and include your name, membership number and which course you would like to register for. Please note that applications for K102 will be available to download during the year. The application process will be available through UNISON communications, social media pages or directly on the member learning platform.



"ANGER IS JUSTIFIED. HOPE IS COLLECTIVE. ACTION WINS."

GET INVOLVED -

[HTTPS://SHORTURL.AT/CKS7E](https://shorturl.at/CKS7E)



YOUR UNION. YOUR BRANCH.

All UNISON members are part of a larger branch.

To find out which branch you are part of click [here](#).



**UNISON NORTHERN IRELAND
SOCIAL CARE NETWORK**

The network is a group for members working in the private social care sector helping to shape the work of UNISON on issues such as campaigning, pay, terms and conditions.

If you would like to get involved in the network please contact Susan Neill on s.neill@unison.co.uk.

Stronger in UNISON

UNISON is the largest trade union in the health & social care sector fighting for the rights of our members and challenging companies in areas such as pay, non-payment of the minimum wage; zero-hour contracts; terms and conditions; training; scheduling and length of homecare visits, travel time; safe staffing in care homes and other health & safety concerns.

STAND UP FOR SOCIAL CARE