

UNISON FOR SOCIAL CARE WORKERS



January 2026

It's Time for the Real Living Wage



UNISON members in Northern Ireland's social care sector are united and increasingly frustrated over the ongoing failure to be paid a Real Living Wage. Despite keeping services running through crisis and crisis, social care workers continue to feel undervalued and underpaid. Members are angered that the Minister has gone back on his clear commitment to implement the Real Living Wage by September 2025—a promise that was made publicly and repeatedly, but has now been quietly abandoned. Through UNISON, members are building collective strength, increasing pressure, and demanding tangible results—not just empty promises. This campaign is focused on dignity, respect, and achieving real improvements in pay and working conditions for a workforce that cannot wait any longer. Now is the time to organise, stand together, and demand action. Do you want to be involved? Do you want change? If you do, click the link below to get involved, and help secure a Real Living Wage for social care workers.

“ANGER IS JUSTIFIED. HOPE IS COLLECTIVE. ACTION WINS.”
GET INVOLVED - [HTTPS://SHORTURL.AT/CKS7F](https://shorturl.at/CKS7F)



UNISON members from across the country have been campaigning and organising to push for changes to the Health and Social Care Visa Scheme. In December, hundreds of UNISON members gathered at Westminster to lobby MPs for an end to exploitation. They are pushing for the replacement of employer-sponsored visas with a sector-wide scheme for social care. **Their demands include retaining the five-year qualifying period for ILR and no retrospective application of any change to immigration rules**, as well as recognising the vital economic and social contributions of health and social care workers.

The campaign also highlights the negative impact of increased salary thresholds across public services, including the NHS, which for the sake of £63 is leading to swathes of frontline NHS staff being dismissed and put at risk of deportation. UNISON members are campaigning for justice, respect and recognition.

The Home Office has put out an ‘Earned Settlement Consultation’ – we urge everyone to respond before 12/02/26. Please support our demands by adding your voice.

You can find the link to the consultation and UNISON consultation response guidance on our website – <https://www.unison-ni.org.uk/fair-visa-campaign> or scan the QR code.

If you would like more information or to get involved in the campaign, please get in touch.



**YOUR UNISON MEMBERSHIP GIVES YOU ACCESS TO IMMIGRATION ADVICE VIA UNISON DIRECT
0800 0857 857 OR THROUGH A MONTHLY FACE TO FACE CLINIC IN THE UNISON BELFAST OFFICE
(02890270172 / N.DONNELLY@UNISON.CO.UK)**



Do You Know Your Rights at Work? UNISON has produced a pocket-sized reference booklet for members, containing valuable information on your Rights at Work. You should talk to your UNISON representative in the first instance if you are called to a meeting at work or if you have any concerns. For the most up-to-date information, or to receive a copy of your Know Your Rights at Work booklet, speak to 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 one of the team - James Large j.large@unison.co.uk - Cailin McVeigh c.mcveigh@unison.co.uk - Angela Basnett a.basnett@unison.co.uk

**YOUR SAFETY.
YOUR VOICE.
YOUR SURVEY.**

UNISON

In October, UNISON’s Health & Safety forum conducted a survey of members working in the Private Social Care sector. The results form a core part of the Health and Safety campaign, highlighting unsafe working conditions and transforming them into opportunities for collective organising. The data shows an overstretched workforce facing long hours, high stress, and inadequate safety protections. Yet it also reveals enormous potential – members working in social care standing together to demand better staffing, fairer contracts, and safer workplaces. The survey received a high response rate and identified several areas members want to organise around. Through this campaign, UNISON members are turning every safety issue into an opportunity for organising, empowerment, and change.

By working together through UNISON you can achieve change. If you would like to get involved or find out more about improving work for you and your colleagues please get in contact with us.



**FREE UNISON
COURSES COMING UP**

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.



**WHO ARE MY UNISON
LOCAL ORGANISERS?**

James Large, Cailin McVeigh & Angela Basnett are the UNISON organisers working in the NI Strategic organising unit.

If you work in a private nursing home or for a private homecare company, feel free to contact them to discuss your UNISON membership benefits, workplace issues, or if anyone who is not yet a member of UNISON wishes to join, please get in touch.

James Large j.large@unison.co.uk - Northern Trust Area

Cailin McVeigh c.mcveigh@unison.co.uk - Belfast Trust and South Eastern Trust Areas

Angela Basnett a.basnett@unison.co.uk - Western Trust and Southern Trust Areas



**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.

Become active in your branch, and take part in your AGM.

To find your branch, and to check dates of your AGM use our branch finder tool.

<https://branches.unison.org.uk/>

STAND UP FOR SOCIAL CARE