



DORSET CARE
ASSOCIATION

SHIVA
FOUNDATION

How Care Workers Could Experience Labour Exploitation

Some care workers may encounter instances of labour exploitation that, while not meeting the threshold of modern slavery, are nonetheless illegal and exploitative. These labour market violations refer to the breach of labour laws and regulations that are designed to protect the rights and well-being of workers. Unlike modern slavery which involves force and control, these violations exploit workers' lack of knowledge about their rights, acceptable working practices and how to advocate for themselves.

Within the care sector, such exploitative practices can take various forms, including:

Illegal Fees

Care workers may fall victim to agencies, both domestically and internationally, that charge exorbitant fees for services such as securing visas or finding employment in care homes and domiciliary care firms across Britain. For instance, a care worker seeking employment in the UK might



be coerced into paying fees ranging from £10,000 to £20,000, creating a significant financial burden and trapping them in a cycle of debt.

However, these fees are illegal in the UK and fit the International Labour Organisation's definition of prohibited fees, which include "any costs incurred in the recruitment process in order for workers to secure employment or placement, regardless of the manner, timing or location of their imposition or collection".

Wage Violations

Despite being entitled to it, care workers may discover that they are being paid below the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage. For instance, employers might make unlawful deductions from their wages, such as deducting uniform costs, food or travel time to and from appointments with clients, thereby reducing the worker's overall pay. While certain deductions may be lawful, they must be clearly itemised on payslips for transparency.

Excessive Working Hours

Despite being entitled to it, care workers may discover that they are being paid below the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage. For instance, employers might make unlawful deductions from their wages, such as deducting uniform costs, food or travel time to and from appointments with clients, thereby reducing the worker's overall pay. While certain deductions may be lawful, they must be clearly itemised on payslips for transparency.



Poor working conditions

Care workers may endure unsafe, unhealthy, or degrading working environments characterised by inadequate facilities, uniforms, or training, as well as a lack of safety measures. For example, a care worker might find themselves in a situation where they are not provided with appropriate training on how to safely lift and transfer patients, resulting in an increased risk of injury. Furthermore, they might lack access to necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to safeguard against infectious diseases, exposing them to potential health hazards. This scenario not only endangers the well-being of care workers but also compromises the quality of care provided to vulnerable individuals.

Verbal Abuse

Workers may face insults, threats, or offensive language from their employer, creating a toxic and demeaning environment. Threats are common among exploited care staff, especially to revoke certificates of sponsorship, have workers deported, report them to the police, or cut working hours. Emotional abuse is also somewhat common, with victims being shouted at, insulted or subject to racial abuse.

Accommodation

Care workers may be subjected to substandard living arrangements orchestrated by their sponsor, in housing that is overcrowded and poorly maintained. In such situations, they may be charged excessive rent, which significantly eats into their wages, leaving them financially vulnerable. Alternatively, in cases of false promises, a care worker might arrive at their designated accommodation only to discover that no housing arrangements have been made for them, leaving them homeless and without recourse.

