

# WORK IT OUT: Advancing migrant workers' rights



THE JOINT COUNCIL  
*for* THE WELFARE  
OF IMMIGRANTS

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# BACKGROUND

At work, we need decent pay, safe and dignified working conditions and protection if our bosses try and take advantage of us. That goes for all of us, whether we were born in the UK or are making our home here.

Migrants are and always have been a vital part of our workforce and labour movement, currently making up around a fifth of the UK's workforce. But too often, our immigration system gets in the way of workers' rights. Migrant workers are overrepresented in low-paid, precarious sectors like care and agriculture, have fewer protections, and are subject to severe restrictions on their rights.

Seasonal and domestic workers can only stay and work for 6 months, after which they must leave, regardless of their situation. Students are only allowed to work for 20 hours per week. Others are entitled to work for longer periods, but they must usually meet a specific set of requirements: be sponsored by an employer, earn above a high salary threshold and pay huge sums to renew their visa on a long path to settlement, or risk becoming undocumented. People who do become undocumented have no right to work in the UK, and nor do the vast majority of people seeking safety.

Under the current system, if people are found working without the right to do so, they can be detained, removed from the UK, or even prosecuted and imprisoned, due to hostile immigration policies like the Illegal Working Offence and right to work checks. These policies form part of the wider Hostile Environment, a set of measures introduced predominantly in 2012 by then Home Secretary Theresa May, designed to make life in the UK impossible for undocumented people. As a result, employers have all the power, and can use workers' immigration status to threaten, silence or trap them in exploitative situations. This makes it harder for migrant workers to challenge unfair conditions, change employers, or demand fair wages, and drives down standards for all workers.

Despite the UK's ongoing need for workers, the Government has recently introduced new policies that will prevent many workers from coming to the UK,

and make life significantly more difficult for those who are allowed here. From April 2024, the Government hiked the salary threshold for “skilled workers” from £26,200 to £38,700, a huge 48% increase, and from March 2024, care workers were stripped of the right to bring their partner, children or other dependants with them to the UK.

## Migrant worker exploitation should be understood as part of a “continuum of exploitation”

We believe that workplace exploitation should be understood as part of a continuum, an approach outlined by the Labour Exploitation Advisory Group (LEAG). At one end of this spectrum we have decent well-paid work, moving to “poor practices” like underpayment, and eventually on the other end of the spectrum to severe exploitation, including human trafficking and forced labour. The UK’s approach to labour exploitation is overly focused on anti-trafficking and modern slavery, taking a carceral and punitive approach to “tackling exploitation”. This approach sees exploitation in binary terms, failing to address its root causes and prevent it from happening, and does not meet survivors’ needs. In recent years, particularly with the passing of the so-called Illegal Migration Act in July 2023, the UK Government has eroded protections for survivors of modern slavery and trafficking, so that even those who are identified are often not supported in the ways they need.

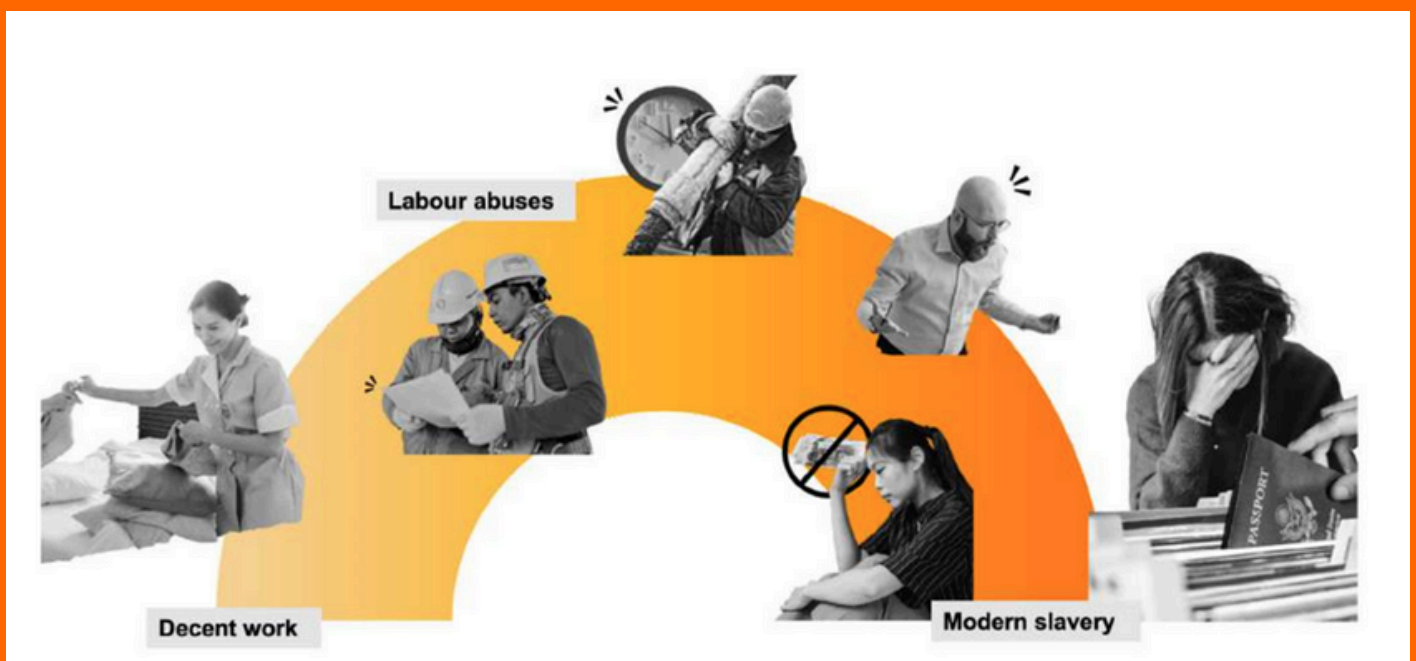


Fig: Graphic produced by Focus on Labour Exploitation (2022) - continuum of exploitation

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Summary

This report examines how restrictions on migrant workers' rights fuel exploitation and undermine migrants' safety and dignity at work. We look at five key areas: the criminalisation of work, the system of work sponsorship, exclusion from the state safety net, lengthy and expensive routes to regular status and a lack of safe reporting pathways.

We also explore the role unions have played, and the importance of building solidarity across the labour and migrant rights movements in order to advance migrant workers' rights and strengthen labour standards for all.

This report brings together our existing research into the issues affecting migrant workers and undocumented people, combining it with collaborative work and joint briefings with partners[1], evidence from other organisations with expertise in this area, and data from our immigration advice helpline for UNISON members.

## Key Findings

### The criminalisation of work

Hostile Environment policies in the workplace, including the Illegal Working Offence and right to work checks, criminalise undocumented people simply for working to support themselves, and drive down safety and conditions for all migrant workers. The criminalisation of work is enforced through racist raids and workplace checks, which harm our workforces and tear communities apart.

### The system of work sponsorship

The UK's system of work sponsorship is inherently exploitative. It ties workers to their employers and makes it extremely difficult to leave or change jobs, as their right to remain in the UK is dependent on their sponsor. Since Brexit,

[1] JCWI, *We Are Here: Routes to Regularisation for the UK's undocumented population*, April 2021; JCWI, *Work It Out: Policy Briefing*, November 2021; JCWI, *"We Also Want to be Safe": Undocumented migrants facing COVID in a Hostile Environment*, January 2022; LEAG, LAWRS, JCWI & SUMW, *Safety for Migrant Workers: the case for safe reporting mechanisms*, December 2022; NEF, Sustain, FLEX, Landworkers Alliance, JCWI, *Debt, Migration and Exploitation: the SWV and the degradation of working conditions in UK horticulture*, July 2023; FLEX, PAWA, JCWI, POMOC, Kanlungan, Dr Inga Thiemann, ATLEU, Migrant Voice, *Joint Position Paper on Preventing Exploitation in the Adult Social Care Sector*, December 2023; Dr Inga Thiemann, Prof Konstantinos Alexandris Polomarkakis, Dr Natalie Sedacca, Dr Manoj Dias-Abey, Dr Joyce Jiang, JCWI, FLEX, Kanlungan, SEEAC, *UK Agriculture and Care Visas: Worker exploitation and obstacles to redress*, March 2024; JCWI, FLEX, LAWRS, Work Rights Centre, *Policy Proposal: How to ensure safety and dignity for migrant workers*, February 2024

the UK Government has increased the use of restrictive, temporary work visas in sectors like care and farming, further fuelling exploitation and putting people at risk of being made undocumented.

### **Exclusion from the state safety net**

The 'No Recourse to Public Funds' condition excludes most migrants from accessing state support in times of difficulty, trapping people in exploitative and dangerous conditions, both at work and at home.

### **Routes to regularisation**

The UK's hostile and complex immigration system creates precarity, trapping people on long expensive routes to settlement and, too often, making people undocumented. Once undocumented it is extremely difficult to get back to secure status, as routes to regularisation are so lengthy and complex, leaving subject to Hostile Environment policies for years and sometimes decades on end.

### **Safe reporting pathways**

In the UK, immigration enforcement is prioritised above workers' safety and wellbeing. Data is routinely shared between workplace inspectorates / the police and Immigration Enforcement, making it impossible for migrant workers to cooperate with inspectors. This heightens the risks of exploitation for migrant workers, and drives down workplace conditions for all of us.

### **The role of unions**

Migrants are and always have been a central part of our workforce and labour rights movement. Yet their involvement has often come at great personal sacrifice due to barriers which too often make it impossible to join a union or take part in industrial action. Increasingly, unions are taking action to advance migrants' rights, but there is still a long way to go until all workers can access the support and protections afforded by unions.

**All workers need decent pay, safe workplaces and the means to change jobs and get support if they are exploited, no matter what papers they hold. This report lays out how to get there.**

- Ensure everyone has the right to work through abolishing the Illegal Working Offence and right to work checks
- Scrap the system of work sponsorship and ensure all work visas come with the option to safely change jobs and a pathway to permanent settlement.
- Ensure everyone can access state support in times of difficulty.
- Introduce a straightforward route to regularisation based on five years residence, and support people to maintain secure status once they have it.
- Establish safe reporting pathways through ending data sharing between labour inspectorates and the police with immigration enforcement.
- Remove barriers which prevent migrants from joining a union and accessing its support.
- Listen to and be led by the views of migrant workers when developing policies which impact them.

# 1. THE RIGHT TO WORK FOR ALL

**How do we get there? Abolish Hostile Environment policies from the workplace, including the Illegal Working Offence and associated right to work checks**

## **The criminalisation of work**

Most of us need to work to survive, including people who are undocumented. However, the Illegal Working Offence and ‘right to work’ checks – cornerstone policies of the Hostile Environment – prevent undocumented migrants from accessing safe employment and put them at risk of detention, removal or even criminal proceedings if they are identified by the authorities. The threat of Immigration Enforcement action if undocumented workers are caught pushes them into precarious, underregulated and low-paid sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, cleaning and care, where they are more likely to be at the mercy of unscrupulous employers and face increased risk of exploitation.

Over time, the Government has ramped up hostile policies in the workplace. It became an offence to employ someone who is not entitled to work in the UK under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, and since 2012, all workers have been subject to workplace checks. The Immigration Act 2016 further increased penalties on employers who fail to check the immigration status of their employees, making it a criminal offence to knowingly employ someone without the right to work, and to work without correct paperwork, which can lead to workers having their wages seized as the proceeds of a crime.

Our research on undocumented people’s experiences of COVID highlights that during the pandemic, undocumented migrants were overrepresented in jobs on the frontline of the crisis, leaving them more likely to contract COVID at work, yet unable to access the vast majority of employment protections and rights necessary to keep them safe. FLEX rightly describe the experience of migrant workers in low-paid and insecure work during the pandemic as ‘hyper-precarity.’



The criminalisation of work is enforced through a spectrum, from online right to work checks by HR departments to violent immigration raids led by Immigration Enforcement and the police. This incites fear among migrant workers and turns employers into border guards, tasked with carrying out immigration checks and made complicit in conducting workplace raids. Hostile Environment policies in the workplace are felt most sharply by undocumented people, but the culture of fear and harm they create impacts all migrants, and even British Black and brown people, as seen most famously by the Windrush scandal.

## **Right to work checks**

Serious issues arise from right to work checks. As outlined by MRN, technical problems are common, and employers often lack information about the processes involved and make wrongful decisions as a result. Concerningly, there are frequent reports of facial recognition software causing racial discrimination, and workers wrongfully being asked to pay for checks. In 2021, IWGB union took Uber to court over its use of facial recognition technology which they found was five times more likely to cause the termination of darker skinned workers, resulting in a worker receiving financial settlement from Uber. We have also received reports about employers favouring British workers because they are unsure about their obligations and fear criminal sanctions if they get something wrong in the course of employing a migrant worker.

Our research into the comparable “Right to Rent” scheme, another cornerstone Hostile Environment policy, found that the scheme causes discrimination, making it harder for migrants and Black and brown British citizens to rent a home. When faced with the threat of a hefty fine or even a criminal sentence for employing or renting to people without the right paperwork, it is possible to see why some landlords and employers may choose the “less risky” option of avoiding renting to or employing migrants altogether. As a result, these policies fuel inequality, making it harder for migrants to rent a decent home or work to support themselves and their families.

## Workplace immigration raids

Employers assist the Home Office in carrying out inspections and raids on workplaces, which harm our workplaces and wider communities. Thousands of raids are carried out each year: during 2023 the Home Office lauded itself for conducting 150 workplace raids and arresting 105 migrant workers in one day, and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak boasted about increasing raids by a further 70%. Sectors targeted include food delivery, hospitality, construction and social care, where the Home Office arrested care workers in the middle of their shifts. These are the same workers we were encouraged by the Government to clap for during the COVID pandemic.

In joint research carried out with FLEX, Kanlungan, SEEAC and academic partners into restrictive work visas, we found that in contrast to a lack of health and safety enforcement, there were several mentions of inspections relating to immigration enforcement. One worker reported seeing a Home Office raid on a nearby building, commenting, ***“I had my papers and I was still really scared. I really hope I never encounter or meet them anywhere. It was really fearful experience for me.”*** This demonstrates the strength of the culture of fear created by hostile immigration policies in all areas of public life. Workers with a secure immigration status are deterred from reporting mistreatment or seeking support and those who are undocumented find it almost impossible due to the risk that this could lead to being detained, deported or facing criminal proceedings.

On top of this, workplace raids enable the Home Office to profit off people's misery. As MRN highlight, since the beginning of 2018, around 5000 penalties have been issued to employers, totalling an eye-watering £88.4 million. In February this year, the Government tripled already steep fines for employing people without the right to work, from £15,000 to £45,000 per worker, and up to £60,000 for repeat breaches.

## 3C leave

Many people with the right to work face wrongful dismissal or discrimination due to right to work checks that happen when a worker has a pending immigration application. When someone makes an in-time application to extend their visa, they have something called Section 3C leave while they wait. Section 3C in theory extends their existing leave and rights until the application is decided or withdrawn – so a worker who previously had the right to work still has it while they await a decision on their application. However, there is no easy

way to prove that a person has 3C leave, as the Home Office does not provide any proof of application.

Migrants' rights organisations such as Migrants At Work have long raised concerns that this form of leave fails to protect workers. Through our legal casework and helplines, JCWI frequently encounters people who have the right to work but cannot prove it, because of employers' lack of understanding about 3c leave. Severe Home Office delays in making decisions means that people are left without legal protections for longer and longer periods. As a result, many people lose their jobs, and are pushed into destitution or made undocumented. The charity RAMFEL recently won a landmark legal challenge, in which the High Court ruled that the Home Office is acting unlawfully in its failure to provide proof of status to thousands of people.

## **What needs to change?**

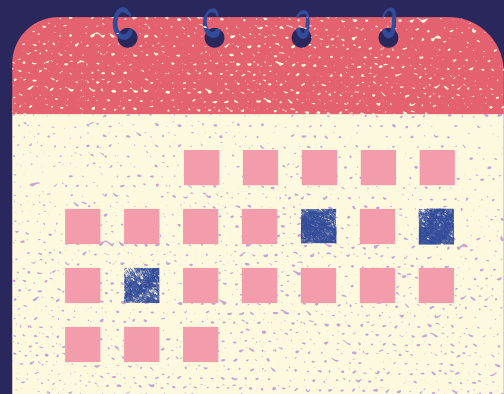
Everyone should have the right to work if they choose, to support themselves and their families, without fear of racist workplace raids, ending up detained or even facing criminal prosecution. Making sure that undocumented workers can access workplace rights and protections is essential to tackling discrimination in the workplace, and would lift up standards and conditions for all workers.

To achieve this, the Government must:

- Ensure everyone has the right to work, through repealing the Illegal Working Offence and associated right to work checks.
- Put an end to the violent and racist practice of immigration raids which harm our workplaces and tear communities apart.

## Case study: Dianne

Dianne is a refugee and caller to our legal helpline for UNISON members. When she completed 5 years residence as a refugee, she applied for Indefinite Leave to Remain, before her previous leave to remain expired.



Her application remained pending for over 6 months which prompted her employer to seek an update and conduct a manual right to work check. The Home Office claims standard practice is to respond to requests with 7-10 working days, but the employer did not receive a response within this timeframe. The Home Office's failings meant Dianne was suspended from work without pay and threatened with termination. It was only after she submitted a complaint and a pre-action letter, with JCWI's assistance, that the Home Office responded confirming her right to work. Thankfully, they agreed to expedite the decision-making process for her Indefinite Leave to Remain application.

## 2. SECURITY, FLEXIBILITY AND AGENCY AT WORK

**How do we get there?** End the system of work sponsorship and ensure all work visas have the option for renewal and a pathway to settlement. Workers must be able to change jobs safely and protected against being made undocumented due to exploitation.

### **The UK's work sponsorship system**

There is clear evidence that the UK's work sponsorship system is inherently exploitative. Anyone wishing to come to the UK on a work visa must have a job offer from an employer that is registered as a licensed employer with the Home Office. Within this system, migrant workers have the right to change sponsors in theory, but in practice it is almost impossible. This means workers are effectively tied to their employers, as their right to remain in the UK is dependent on being employed by their sponsor, and could be put at risk if they report an abusive employer or leave their workplace. As outlined by the Work Rights Centre, this leaves many workers forced to remain in abusive or exploitative conditions.

Since Britain left the EU in January 2020, the government has significantly increased the use of restrictive, temporary and sector-specific work visas in order to plug skills gaps in sectors like farming, health and social care. The latest data shows that the numbers of work visas granted are on the rise, highlighting the continued need for migrant labour. In 2023, 337,240 work visas were granted, 26% higher than 2022 and 146% higher than prior to the pandemic in 2019, due to Brexit shutting down the option of visa-free entry for many EU workers. This was due in part to the increase in Health & Care Worker visas – which almost doubled (91%) between 2022 and 2023.[2]

Restrictive work visas increase the risk of exploitation for workers and can leave people undocumented, particularly when they are very short-term. This includes the Overseas Domestic Worker Visa, Seasonal Worker Visa and Health & Care Worker Visa.

[2] 146,477 Health & Care Worker visas issued in 2023.

## Case study: Lilian

Lilian is from the Philippines and has lived in the UK for 7 years. She came to the UK on an overseas domestic worker visa, but when she was unable to extend it after 6 months, she became undocumented. She lives and shares a room with a friend. Lilian was working as a nanny before the COVID pandemic, but lost her job when the UK went into lockdown. She has health conditions which made it very hard to work, and once the lockdowns lifted, she was unable to pick up enough hours to support herself. She currently works 2 days a week and struggles to make ends meet, but feels she must stay under the radar due to her lack of papers.

### Overseas Domestic Worker (ODW) visa

The 6-month ODW visa is one of the most restrictive temporary visas, forcing domestic workers into extreme dependence on their employer and putting them at significant risk of exploitation. Every year, around 20,000 ODW visas are issued to migrant domestic workers, with private individuals as their employer and sponsor. In 2012, when then Home-Secretary Theresa May ushered in the Hostile Environment, she also removed rights for which domestic worker campaigners had long fought for from the ODW visa, including the ability to renew the visa and eventually apply for settlement.

In 2016, the Government introduced a formal right to change employer, but this right does not function in practice, because the ODW visa remains non-renewable, even for workers facing abuse. Domestic workers have only a matter of months or even weeks to find new employment, or become undocumented. This is entirely unrealistic, and few employers will hire a domestic worker midway through their six-month visa. This leaves many workers trapped in exploitation, isolated in private homes away from support. Recent research from Kalayaan highlights the abuse faced by domestic workers in the UK over the past 12 years, often amounting to modern day slavery.

### Seasonal Worker Visa (SWV)

Experts have long warned about the risks inherent in the UK's Seasonal Worker Visa, launched in 2019. Under this scheme, workers are recruited to work in horticulture or poultry for a maximum of six months and then sent home, with no option to renew or extend their visa. There is strong and growing evidence – including by FLEX, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) and the ICIBI - of poor worker welfare, chronic low pay, overcrowded accommodation, exploitation and human trafficking for forced labour.

Further, workers on the SWV are tied to specific scheme operators, and although they can request to be transferred to a different farm, this is often extremely difficult in practice. Our joint research with FLEX, Kanlungan, SEEAC and academics, found that despite significant differences between the Seasonal Worker visa and the Health & Care Worker visa, the 'tied' element in both visas makes migrant care and farm workers more precarious, and increases their vulnerability to abuse, discrimination and exploitation. In addition, the temporary, non-renewable nature of the visa puts workers at high risk of being made undocumented.

For a detailed exploration of the dangers facing workers on the SWV, see *Debt, Migration & Exploitation*, research by NEF, Sustain, FLEX, the LWA and JCWI.

## **Health & Care Worker Visa**

The care sector has long been characterised by poor working conditions, low pay and precarious employment arrangements for migrant and British workers alike. It is increasingly being recognised as a high-risk sector for workplace abuse and exploitation.

In August 2020, in the wake of Brexit and the start of the COVID pandemic, the Government launched the Health and Care Worker visa, which became accessible to care workers and care assistants in February 2022. There is ever-growing evidence that workers on this visa face serious risks of under-pay and exploitation, including debt bondage caused by hefty repayment clauses and illegal recruitment fees to agencies in workers' countries of origin. The charity Unseen reported the number of modern slavery cases in the care sector skyrocketed by over 1,100% from 63 in 2021 to over 800 in 2022, following the Home Office adding care workers to the Shortage Occupation List.

Our joint research shows how the Health and Care Worker visa creates dependency, as it is extremely difficult to move jobs. People on this visa who change employers, because they wish to change jobs or because their sponsor's licence is revoked, get just 60 days to find another licensed employer to sponsor them, and then to apply for and secure a new visa. In reality, it takes an average of 18 weeks for workers to secure a new visa. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism recently revealed that 122 care providers had their licences revoked in 2022 and 2023, leaving nearly 3000 care workers jobless.

## Case Study: Victoria

Victoria came to the UK in 2021 to work as a health and care assistant after being promised employment by a care provider. After a month working full time, she was given only minimal hours, amounting to 1 day a week of work. Victoria was struggling make ends meet and began accumulating debt. Her situation became worse when her employer's licence was revoked, leading to her receiving a curtailment notice by the Home Office within days. She tried her best to find a new sponsor but was unable to do so. She could not return to her home country due to the massive debt she had accumulated due to relocation costs and the lack of hours and income. When she sought help from JCWI's advice line she had been made undocumented and was in need of urgent assistance. Through the support of JCWI and UNISON she was able to access an independent solicitor and has made an application based on her human rights.

Like everyone on work visas, people on the Health and Care Worker visa have NRPF, so cannot access any state support. As a result, workers are left in limbo, at risk of destitution for weeks or months on end, and face the threat of removal if they are unable to secure new employment. To make matters worse, from March 2024, care workers were stripped of the right to bring their partner, children or other dependants with them to the UK. This cruel decision deprives migrant care workers of the right to family life and risks deterring these workers from the UK at a time when the social care sector is in crisis, which will make life harder for the people who rely on social care.

### **What are we seeing about this visa through our UNISON helpline?**

JCWI runs a legal helpline to provide free immigration advice for members of UNISON, assisting roughly 25-30 people per week. Over the past 3 years, and especially in the last year, we have seen a sharp increase in the number of care workers reporting vulnerable and exploitative situations. Callers frequently tell us about issues they are facing on the Health and Care Worker visa, including mistreatment, poor working conditions and the near impossibility of changing employers. One major issue we hear of is debt caused by not being allocated enough hours, while having to pay off sizeable repayment clauses<sup>[3]</sup> and, in some cases, illegal recruitment fees.

[3] Repayment clauses require workers to pay back the upfront costs that the employer has invested in recruiting workers if they leave employment. These can be legal in the UK, but in some cases they are being badly misused. Workers are being charged large amounts of money where they want to leave their employer, which they often cannot afford. UNISON have seen amounts of £15,000 being charged to workers seeking to resign from a position, which can trap workers in exploitative employment.

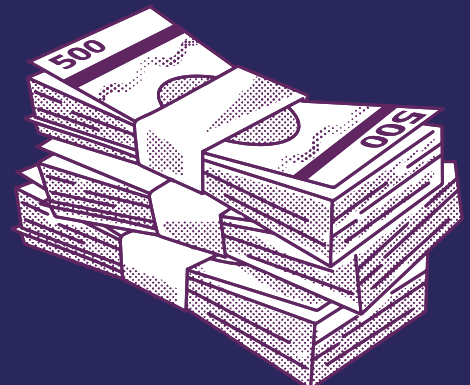


Workers are effectively being blackmailed by their employers into accepting poor working conditions with the threat of taking on huge debts if they leave. We are increasingly hearing from care workers who are at risk of destitution and being made undocumented because their employer's sponsorship license has been revoked, leaving them jobless with no access to state support. Home Office delays in issuing new sponsorship licences can prevent workers from starting new employment, leaving them trapped in destitution for longer.

Since the announcement of a cruel new policy banning care workers from bringing dependants to the UK which came into force in March 2024, we are hearing from extremely distressed care workers, concerned that they must choose between a livelihood and being with their loved ones.

## Case study: Florence

Florence paid £12,000 in recruitment fees and remortgaged her home, in order to come to the UK to work in a care home in Derbyshire. Her employer, also her landlord, provided Florence with inadequate accommodation with no heating, for which he deducts over £600 per month from her wages. She lives in a rural area with several other care workers. Some are accommodated in caravans, yet still expected to pay the £600 per month. Florence approached UNISON after being mistreated and racially targeted by her boss. After instigating a complaint, Florence was dismissed by her employer, who told her that he would inform the Home Office she was no longer working and ordered her to pay an extortionate fee to continue living in her home. As a result, Florence was put at risk of being made destitute and undocumented.



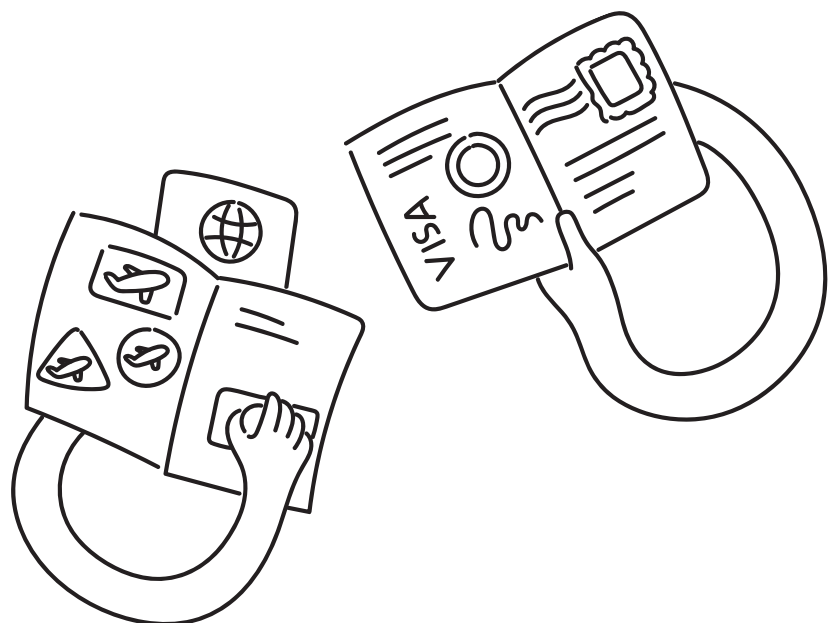
## What needs to change?

All workers should feel secure at work, with the agency and flexibility to safely change jobs and options to live and settle in the UK if they choose. No one should be put at risk of being made undocumented due to the actions of their employers.

To achieve this, the Government should:

- Ensure all work visas are open and flexible, with options for renewal and a pathway to permanent settlement.
- End the inherently exploitative system of work sponsorship and sector-specific visas - the Work Rights Centre [outline](#) how this could be achieved in practice.
- Ensure all workers can safely change jobs by removing the obligation to apply for a new visa when changing jobs.
- Provide the unrestricted right to work to workers at risk of becoming undocumented, or who have been made undocumented due to workplace exploitation (eg due to leaving exploitative work or their employer having its sponsorship licence revoked.) [Examples](#) of this already in place are the 'bridging' and 'reactivation' visa in Ireland, New Zealand and Canada.
- Ensure everyone has the right to a family life regardless of what job we do or what country we are from – repeal the new policy banning care workers from bringing dependants to the UK.

For more specific recommendations on the different sector visa schemes, see the following publications on [care](#), [agriculture](#) and [domestic work](#).



# 3. ACCESSING STATE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY

**How do we get there? Scrap the discriminatory 'No Recourse to Public Funds' condition which pushes people into destitution and precarity**

Migrants are overrepresented in low-paid, high risk and insecure work. They also experience higher rates of destitution than their British counterparts. This is due to a combination of factors including structural racism and hostile visa and immigration policies such as the use of restrictive work visas, an eye-wateringly expensive immigration system, lengthy routes to permanent settlement and the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) condition.

## What is 'No Recourse to Public Funds'?

The NRPF condition excludes most migrants from accessing the state safety net[4]. Migrants on almost all types of visa, and their families, are subject to NRPF until they obtain permanent status, which can take five to ten years, or even longer. The number of people subject to the NRPF condition has increased significantly in recent years. The Migration Observatory estimates it was around 2.6 million at the end of 2022, a huge increase of over 1 million in just 2 years. In addition to those with an NRPF condition attached to their visa, all undocumented people are automatically excluded from any state support, and people seeking asylum must rely on minimal asylum support.

People with the legal right to work who are subject to the NRPF condition are entitled to claim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), but this is insufficient to allow them to make ends meet, especially for those who are already struggling.

*"Undocumented people have no Government help. Other people get full Housing Benefit... for undocumented people it is just a voucher [from a charity], sometimes it's nothing. You don't have money, you don't have another mouthful of daily food"*

Rathindra

[4] People with NRPF are barred from accessing Child Benefit, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, and Income Support, among others. They are entitled to very limited support, including Statutory Sick Pay, but people are often unaware of their rights and what they can access.

SSP in the UK is only paid from the fourth day of illness and is set at just £116.75 a week. On top of this, around two million workers - including an unknown number of migrant workers - do not even earn enough to qualify for SSP, leaving them completely without support if they are unwell.

### **How NRPF impacts migrant communities**

NRPF pushes people into poverty, unsustainable debt and unsafe and overcrowded housing. The NRPF condition disproportionately impacts women, low-income families, disabled people, pregnant people and Black and brown British children. Over the past decade, there has been a 150% increase in the number of migrant families accessing emergency local authority support, an option that is only available to certain people including families with children at risk of destitution and adults with care needs. The effects of NRPF are particularly felt by people on the lengthy and expensive 10-year route to settlement, which traps people in limbo and precarity for a decade, until they are eligible for permanent settlement and the right to access public funds.

The NRPF condition also increases the risk of exploitation at home and in the workplace, as people are more likely to be trapped in abusive situations if they have no safety net to rely on should they attempt to leave. Hostile Environment policies, including the NRPF condition, exacerbate the experience of domestic abuse, excluding survivors from accessing emergency refuges and forcing them to choose between remaining with their perpetrator or facing homelessness. Similarly, migrant workers with NRPF are more likely to remain with abusive employers if they cannot access state funds during periods of unemployment.

### **NRPF in the context of COVID and a cost-of-living crisis**

During the COVID crisis, workers subject to NRPF were put in an extremely dangerous position. Our research on undocumented people's experiences of the pandemic found that many were forced to choose between isolating without pay and continuing to work in unsafe conditions, which led to COVID outbreaks. One such outbreak in a factory in December 2020 resulted in the avoidable and tragic deaths of two migrant workers.

*"I can't afford to be sick, [and] I can't afford to give the virus to others either"*

Maria

People with NRPF who lost their jobs lost all their income, sometimes overnight. This increased the risk of homelessness and workplace exploitation for migrant workers with NRPF, who could not rely on the support of the state. One study found that the impact of COVID was most severe on workers with NRPF, with 14% unable to pay their rent or mortgage on time compared to 2% of workers with recourse to public funds.

Levels of in-work poverty have been steadily increasing over the past two decades, and now, during a cost-of-living crisis that hits low-income households hardest, the impacts of the NRPF condition are felt even more sharply. Important research from Praxis into the impacts of NRPF during a cost of living crisis, found that two thirds of people with NRPF are struggling to feed their children, and 50% are turning to food banks and charities to meet their basic needs, compared with just 3% of the general population.

Nurses and care workers are among high numbers of people in low-paid jobs who are being forced to rely on charitable food banks for the first time to stay afloat. The cruel new policy banning health and care workers from bringing family members to the UK will only push these workers deeper into destitution, with no family to rely on for support.

### Case Study: Blessing

Blessing came to the UK from Nigeria 15 years ago. She has a partner and 4 children under 10. They are all undocumented. Before the COVID pandemic both Blessing and her partner were working cash-in-hand doing odd jobs like cleaning houses and ushering for parties, but this work dried up completely during the pandemic. As a result she accumulated large rent arrears and was issued with a formal eviction notice. Blessing and her family were excluded from accessing Housing Benefit or homelessness assistance because they do not have access to public funds. As a result, they were evicted and moved into cramped accommodation by Social Services, provided through Section 17 support for destitute children and their families. She has also had a battle with her children's school, as her eldest son was deemed ineligible for Free School Meals. They were supported during this time by a community charity, who provided supermarket vouchers.

Blessing's story shows the far-reaching impacts of the cruel NRPF policy, which puts people's lives at risk every day, and significantly exacerbates the effects of public crises for migrant communities. In order to avoid a repeat of the fallout from the COVID pandemic, this policy must be abolished.

## What needs to change?

Everyone should be able to access state support during times of difficulty, regardless of whether they are working, or what papers they hold.

To achieve this, the Government must:

- Make the state safety net accessible to all those who need it through scrapping the harmful NRPF policy.



## 4. ROUTES TO STATUS AND RIGHTS FOR UNDOCUMENTED PEOPLE

**How do we get there?** Introduce a simple, five-year route to regularisation for undocumented people, and support people to maintain secure immigration status once they have it.

### **How people become undocumented in the UK**

Undocumented people are a central part of our communities and workforce. The vast majority of undocumented people in the UK arrived through “regular” or “formal” routes and were later made undocumented by our hostile immigration system. The UK’s complex immigration rules penalise people and make them undocumented for a range of reasons outside their control, including inability to pay extortionate fees, domestic abuse, loss of work, poor legal advice or a simple mistake. Our landmark research into the UK’s undocumented population in 2021 found that the vast majority of people surveyed (82%) came to the UK through regular means and were later pushed out of status by the system. Once people become undocumented, they become subject to Hostile Environment policies in all areas of public life.

In many cases where relationship breakdown leads to loss of status, domestic abuse is at play. The people in our We Are Here research experienced domestic violence and abuse at a rate far higher than the national average. Where a person’s immigration status is dependent on a relationship, they become more vulnerable to abuse, because leaving or reporting a perpetrator can risk losing their status and becoming subject to enforcement and removal. Research by found that gender-based violence among migrant women is exacerbated by having insecure immigration status, with over two thirds reporting their partner had threatened them with deportation if they reported the abuse. When relationships break down for any reason, the immigration system is inflexible and fails to support people to maintain their status.

Another way people are made undocumented is through being priced out of maintaining a secure immigration status. The UK’s visa and immigration fees are extremely high and have risen sharply over the past two decades. These bring in huge profits for the Home Office, off the back of migrants who are often



already struggling to make ends meet. UKVI, which processes applications, aims to recover twice as much in fees as it spends. Government income from immigration fees rose from £184 million in 2003 to £2,200 million in 2022. Just last year, application fees increased by 15-35%, and the health surcharge by a huge 66%.

### **Who are the UK's undocumented communities?**

Compared with other countries in Europe, the UK's undocumented population is relatively settled. Over half have lived here for more than five years, and an estimated quarter of undocumented people are children (215,000), half of whom were born in the UK. Our research found that a majority of undocumented people have family in the UK, often their only source of support. The most significant region of origin for the UK's undocumented population is Asia (52%) followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (20%), the Americas and non-EU Europe (16%) and the Middle East / North Africa (11%). There is no definitive figure for the number of undocumented people in the UK, but recent estimates suggest between 800,000 and 1.2 million people. This represents a larger proportion of the population than in countries like France, Spain and Portugal, where there are more routes to regularisation.

It is possible to apply for a fee waiver, but it is difficult to obtain because the Home Office requires huge amounts of financial and other evidence to prove that the applicant cannot afford the fee and has not spent money on anything but the most essential items. There is no justification for the Home Office making such large profits on visa fees when its counterparts in other countries function without doing so, and until 2003, the UK charged nothing at all for visa extensions, work permits and settlement.

### **Inadequate routes to regularisation**

Once undocumented, it is extremely difficult to get back to secure immigration status. The UK provides very limited routes for undocumented people to regularise their status and regain the right to work, and existing routes are incredibly lengthy, complicated and expensive. The Home Office pursues an approach focused entirely on removing people without status from the UK, rather than providing them with alternative solutions. Children, including those born in the UK, are required to demonstrate having lived in the UK a minimum of seven years, or half their lifetime, to be eligible to obtain regular immigration status. Adults must demonstrate an enormous 20 years' residence before they are considered "permanent enough" to apply to regularise their status. There are other ways people can regularise their status, for example as the sole carer of a British or settled child or through a relationship to a British or settled person, but these are only accessible in extremely limited circumstances.



To make matters worse, the average cost of a regularisation application in the UK is more than ten times that of comparable countries like France, Spain, Germany and Portugal. In the UK, an undocumented person would typically have to pay between £2000 and £4000 in fees alone to make an initial application. This is excluding legal fees.

### **The lengthy and expensive 10-year route to settlement**

Even when people manage to regularise their status, too often they lose it again because the route to permanent status is so long and expensive. Once regularised, previously undocumented people must remain on the long 10-year route until they qualify for permanent settlement, forced to pay huge sums every 2.5 years to renew their visa or risk being made undocumented all over again. Praxis outline that for each renewal application, people must pay £2,608 per adult and £2,223 per child. In stark contrast, the actual cost for the Home Office to process an application for Limited Leave to Remain is just £335. Since October 2023, it costs a family of four on the 10-year route almost £70,000 to reach permanent settlement. Our We Are Here research reveals a worrying trend of people managing to jump through hoops to regularise their status, only to lose it again at a later stage because they cannot save up the several thousand pounds required in fees every two and a half years.

### **Case study: Chioma**

Chioma moved to the UK in 2004 from Nigeria on a visitor visa, to escape domestic abuse and establish a better life for her children. For many years she was undocumented, and worked in various roles within the care sector, destitute and in fear of the Home Office. Chioma was underpaid at work, and she and her children went through periods of homelessness. She felt unable to report serious rights violations and a lack of health and safety measures at work. If she heard an ambulance come to the care home where she worked, she would hide in the toilet, fearing the siren was from a police car sent to arrest her. Chioma was eventually able to regularise her status through a family life application. Since getting her status, life is not easy, but her rights are respected at work, and she feels peaceful and unafraid.

Chioma's story shows the life-altering impact regularising one's immigration status can have, in particular the freedom that comes from no longer being subject to Hostile Environment policies.

## What needs to change?

People who have put down roots in the UK should be able to lead secure, fulfilling lives in their communities, and be supported back to status through simple, accessible routes if they become undocumented. Comparable countries like Spain, France, Switzerland and Portugal offer migrants who work and put down roots simpler and more affordable routes to regularisation. As a result, they can live safely in their homes and earn a decent living, and far fewer people are made undocumented. The UK should take a similarly flexible and permissive approach towards people who become undocumented.

We also need urgent changes to the immigration system so that people don't become undocumented in the first place, and are supported to maintain their status and settle here within a reasonable timeframe if they wish to. No one should be made undocumented because they can't afford application fees, do not know how to apply for a fee waiver or simply don't understand the process.

To support this, the Government should:

- Support undocumented people to resolve their status and access their rights: introduce a simple route to regularisation based on 5 years' residence, and scrap existing lengthy and complex routes to regularisation.
- Protect people from being made undocumented because they can't afford extortionate visa fees: ensure that immigration fees are set no higher than the cost to the Home Office of processing an application
- Simplify the process of applying for a fee waiver.
- Ensure people who put down roots in the UK can settle here if they choose: abolish the harmful 10-year route and cap routes to settlement at five years.

For more information on scrapping the 10-year route, see our [joint briefing](#) with Praxis, Reunite Families, Migrant Voice, GMIAU and RAMFEL.

# 5. WORKERS' RIGHTS ABOVE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

**How do we get there?** Ensure all workers can safely and anonymously report abuse and exploitation without fear of Immigration Enforcement action or criminal proceedings

## **The impacts of the UK's lack of safe reporting pathways for workers**

In the UK, immigration enforcement is prioritised above workers' rights and safety. As part of the Hostile Environment, data is routinely shared between workplace inspectorates / the police and Immigration Enforcement, and in some cases joint inspections are carried out. This happens even though no labour market enforcement agency or local authority has a legal duty to check workers' immigration status or report workers to the Home Office.

This makes it almost impossible for migrant workers to cooperate with inspectors, due to the fear of being brought to the Home Office's attention and facing removal or detention. This culture of fear extends far beyond the workplace and impacts all migrant survivors of abuse. Research by LAWRS found that one in two migrant women with insecure status do not report abuse to the police, for fear of disbelief, detention or removal.

The UK's lack of safe reporting pathways leaves undocumented workers in particular with no power to challenge exploitation if it occurs, facing the very real threat of being punished instead of protected if they report it. Our joint I-Claim research - exploring the living and working conditions of irregular migrants - highlights how the Hostile Environment creates 'everyday bordering' throughout society which pushes undocumented people under the radar, making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, particularly in the absence of safe reporting pathways.

Employers can withhold wages, pay less than Minimum Wage, assign excessively long hours and impose dangerous working conditions on undocumented workers, knowing they are unlikely to be held accountable. Undocumented workers have no access to most unions or employment tribunals, no protection from labour inspections and no access to public funds,

and face being reported to Immigration Enforcement, detained or removed if they are discovered during a raid. This means they often have no alternative but to remain in exploitative conditions.

## **Hostile immigration policies drive down conditions for all workers**

The UK's absence of safe reporting pathways not only leaves many migrant workers trapped in abusive or exploitative conditions, but makes it much harder for labour inspectors to do their jobs properly, driving down conditions and pay for all workers.

The Home Office claims that data sharing is necessary for safeguarding purposes, but in reality, it undermines efforts to support victims of abuse and prevent exploitation happening in the first place. Without the cooperation of a significant part of the workforce, inspectors are less able to identify rogue employers or potential victims of workplace exploitation. For example, the Low Pay Commission found that joint inspections prevent people from reporting underpayment of the minimum wage.

An ICIBI report in 2019 highlights multiple instances of exploitation and labour abuses where workers had no formal right to work. In these cases, no action was taken to address workplace rights abuses, and the only action taken

was to remove the affected workers from the UK. In one case, where workers had been paid just £3.50 an hour, the Home Office responded by saying: "where a worker is an illegal migrant, they do not have protection under the Minimum Wage Act". This pushes undocumented workers into destitution and undermines minimum pay protections for all workers by creating a group that can be exploited without consequence.

*"They pay us less than minimum wage. We work at least 12 hours per shift, for £6 an hour. It's a very big supermarket and we have to clean it after more than 12 hours shift, and they do not pay us for that. I've started to have problems at my back and knees... We are afraid to speak up because we are so worried to lose our rights here. Even when some inspectors are coming we are afraid to talk to them"*

Nejati, supermarket worker based in London

## Case study: Fatima

Fatima is from Nigeria, and was trafficked to the UK under false pretences, and the promise of a “business visa”. She works as a home care worker, where she faces discrimination, bullying and gross underpayment, including non-payment for night shifts. She told us she lives in fear of her employers but feels unable to leave or seek help because of her lack of status and risk of being reported to Immigration Enforcement. Fatima is trapped in exploitative working conditions, but is seeking legal advice to try and regularise her immigration status in order to feel able to find support and a new job.

### **The UK’s fragmented and under-resourced labour enforcement system**

Migrant workers’ vulnerability to exploitation and unlawfully low pay is exacerbated by the fragmented and underfunded labour enforcement system. The UK has six different labour market enforcement bodies, all governed by different government departments. This disjointed system is difficult for workers to navigate and for authorities to manage efficiently. In the UK, the number of labour inspectors has fallen by a third since 2010, the second biggest cut across Europe during this time, and now has significantly fewer than the ILO-recommended minimum number of labour inspectors.[15] Even where enforcement is effective, punitive actions against employers can inadvertently leave migrant workers at risk, for example if an employer has its sponsorship licence revoked and a worker has their visa cancelled as a result.



[15] For a useful visual representation of the UK’s labour market enforcement system, see Work Rights Centre’s Systemic Drivers of Migrant Worker Exploitation in the UK report, p17.

## What needs to change?

Safe reporting pathways would enable migrant workers to safely report abuse or exploitation, without fear of Immigration Enforcement action. This would improve pay and conditions for all workers. There is strong support for establishing safe reporting pathways to protect migrant workers and tackle labour exploitation, both in the UK and overseas. It is crucial that safe reporting comes alongside a properly funded, streamlined Single Enforcement Body, instead of the current disjointed and complex system of labour enforcement.

There are also growing examples of good practice, both internationally and in the UK. In countries like Brazil and the Netherlands, labour inspectors found that separating their work from Immigration Enforcement improved conditions and prevented severe abuses. In the US, there is an MOU in place which aims to ensure that all workers, including those who are undocumented, are protected by labour standards. Here in the UK, expert organisations such as LAWRS have campaigned tirelessly for a firewall between the police and Immigration Enforcement to protect migrant survivors of domestic abuse, a call supported by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and London Victims Commissioner.

To bring about safe reporting for victims of abuse and exploitation, the Government should:

- End data sharing between the police and labour inspectorates with Immigration Enforcement, so people are not deterred from reporting abuse due to fear of Home Office action.
- End the practice of joint or simultaneous inspections with immigration authorities, to ensure workers can safely report abuse and inspectors can do their jobs properly.
- Introduce guidance for labour enforcement agencies and local authorities, to prevent them enquiring about workers' immigration status, and support them to build a culture of trust and accountability.
- Properly fund, resource and enforce workplace rights through the establishment of a Single Enforcement Body (SEB). FLEX outline how this would work and incorporate the six labour market enforcement agencies into one streamlined entity.

For more information on how these changes would work in practice, see our joint briefing on safe reporting, Work Rights Centre's report and FLEX and LAWRS's guide for police and labour inspectors working with migrants.

## 6. THE ROLE OF UNIONS

**What needs to change?** Enable unions to meaningfully support and strengthen the rights of migrants with and without formal immigration status, by removing barriers which prevent migrants from joining a union or accessing its support.

Migrants are and have always been a central part of the movement for labour rights, from the Grunwick women's strike in the 1970s, to outsourced cleaners organising for decent pay and conditions today. Yet their involvement has often come at great personal sacrifice, due to barriers which make it difficult – sometimes impossible – for migrant workers to join unions or access their support. Historically, trade unions have not always acted in the interest of their migrant members or migrant workers' rights, and have shown a reluctance to recognise or include undocumented workers as part of their movement. As a result, many migrants feel left behind by trade unions and the labour rights movement, despite their vital role in the struggle to advance workers' rights.

Today, the Government's ramping up of Hostile Environment policies, restrictive tied visas and anti-trade union and protest laws still make it extremely difficult for many migrants to access union support. Workers whose ability to remain in the UK depends on their job are less likely to take industrial action which could threaten their employment security in any way. Further, precarious migrant workers are at greater risk of Immigration Enforcement action or criminal proceedings resulting from collective organising, protest or industrial action, which can deter them from joining a union. This is especially true for undocumented workers, who are often too afraid to disclose their status, let alone organise around it.

In addition, union rules and structures can exclude certain migrants from accessing their support. Joining fees can prevent people on low-incomes from joining a union, and those on temporary work visas (like the Seasonal Worker Visa) may not be able to unionise due to rules around time spent in the UK before accessing union services. Further, migrants are overrepresented in fragmented, underregulated sectors which are harder to unionise, like platform work, care and agriculture.

## **The importance of migrant-led community groups**

As a result, migrant community groups have always played a crucial role in building solidarity and organising migrant workers outside of traditional union spaces, and are an essential means for undocumented workers to assert their rights. Grassroots, migrant-led organisations like Kanlungan Filipino Consortium, Migrants at Work, Regularise and the Voice of Domestic Workers provide essential support and advice for precarious migrant workers in sectors like care, domestic work and cleaning, assisting migrants to defend their workplace rights and resolve their immigration status. For example, the Filipino Domestic Workers Association, established by domestic workers in the UK, is a self-led group dedicated to advancing the rights and welfare of domestic workers, serving as both a campaign hub (calling for reinstatement of the domestic workers concession) and resource centre for migrant workers in the UK.

## **Unions working to advance migrant justice**

In recent years, particularly post-COVID, we are seeing a positive sea change, with many unions taking an active role in advancing migrants' rights, and growing solidarity across struggles through a greater recognition that migrants' rights are workers' rights. A growing number of grassroots, worker-led unions have emerged over the past decade, such as IWGB and UVW, which organise with and for precarious workers, including those who are undocumented. They have secured vital wins such as mass strikes for outsourced cleaners and the first ever union recognition deal in the gig economy. In early 2023, 22 unions came together and pledged to stand in solidarity with migrant workers, advance the rights of undocumented workers, and called for an end to the Government's hostility and racism.

Several major national unions have taken action in solidarity with migrant communities. In 2022, the PCS union brought a legal challenge against the Government's abhorrent Rwanda removal scheme, alongside Detention Action and Care4Calais, and over the past year, UNISON has supported the legal challenge of former Home Secretary Suella Braverman's decision to renege on three key recommendations made by the Windrush scandal inquiry. This decision was found unlawful by the High Court in June 2024. Many unions have specific policy asks to advance migrant workers' rights (in particular those representing large numbers of migrant workers) such as removing the Hostile Environment from public life, establishing safe reporting pathways and abolishing the discriminatory Immigration Health Surcharge and NHS fees.



In addition, there is growing collaboration between migrant organisations and unions. For example, JCWI partners with UNISON to provide a free immigration advice helpline for their members, and in July 2023, major unions came together with over 50 migrant organisations, to call out the government's plan to fund a public sector pay rise through higher NHS and visa fees for migrants.

Despite this, there is still a long way to go until all workers can access the full range of support and protections afforded by unions, regardless of their immigration status. We must eradicate the barriers preventing migrant workers from accessing union support, continue to build solidarity and collaboration between the migrant justice and labour rights movements, and ensure unions use their position and influence to advance migrant workers' rights, including those who are undocumented.

## **What needs to change?**

All workers should be able to join a union, access support and organise collectively for better pay and conditions, regardless of what papers they hold.

To achieve this, we must:

- Repeal all anti-trade union, strike and protest laws which make it harder for unions to access workplaces and for workers to organise or take industrial action to improve their terms and conditions.
- Abolish all Hostile Environment policies which deter migrant workers from joining a union or getting involved in collective organising due to fear of immigration enforcement action or criminal proceedings.
- Reform union rules and practices which exclude migrant workers from unionising and accessing support based on immigration status or how long they have lived in the UK.

# CONCLUSION

We all deserve decent pay, safe and dignified working conditions, and protections if our bosses seek to exploit us, regardless of what country we are from or what papers we hold. But the UK's immigration system and wider Hostile Environment trap migrant workers in a cycle of precarity, poverty and exploitation. This is especially true for undocumented workers, who are excluded from all workplace protections and criminalised simply for working to support themselves and their families.

Since the UK left the EU, the UK Government has ramped up the use of restrictive, tied visas in sectors like care and farming. These visa schemes reduce migrant workers to economic commodities, leaving them dependent on their employer and at greater risk of exploitation. In the care sector in particular, we are seeing a record number of workers without enough hours or pay, having their visas curtailed due to sponsorship revocations, and at real risk of destitution and being made undocumented. These dangers are compounded by a wider landscape of a fragmented, underfunded labour enforcement system alongside increasingly precarious, outsourced and unregulated work in which all workers, regardless of where they are from, lack adequate regulatory protections.

In order to create meaningful change and uplift working standards for all, we must recognise that the rights of workers and migrants are intrinsically linked, build solidarity across struggles and ensure that the views of migrant workers themselves are at the forefront of any change or policy development impacting them.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

To advance the rights of all workers, tackle workplace exploitation and ensure no one is criminalised simply for supporting themselves, the Government must listen to experts – particularly migrant workers – and introduce straightforward, workable changes.

- 1 Ensure everyone has the right to work to support themselves and their families regardless of immigration status:** repeal the Illegal Working Offence and associated right to work checks.
- 2 Ensure workers have security, flexibility and agency at work:** scrap the system of work sponsorship and ensure all work visas are renewable with a pathway to permanent settlement. Workers must be able to change jobs safely with protections against being made undocumented due to exploitation.
- 3 Ensure everyone can access state support in times of difficulty:** scrap the ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ condition which pushes thousands of people into destitution and precarity each year.
- 4 Enable undocumented workers to access status, safety and rights:** introduce a straightforward, five-year route to regularisation and support people to maintain secure immigration status once they have it, so people working in the UK can live as part of our communities for as long as they choose.
- 5 Prioritise workers’ safety and wellbeing over immigration enforcement:** establish safe reporting pathways so all workers can safely report abuse and exploitation without fear of immigration enforcement action.
- 6 Enable unions to meaningfully support and strengthen the rights of all migrant workers with and without formal immigration status:** remove barriers which prevent migrants from joining a union and accessing its support.
- 7 Listen to and be led by the views of migrant workers when developing policies which impact them:** meaningfully engage migrant workers in all stages of policy development, including and especially those with experience of being undocumented.

# ABOUT JCWI

JCWI is an independent national charity, founded in 1967 to defend the rights of Britain's migrant communities and fight for a fairer immigration system.

For more than half a century, we have challenged policies that lead to discrimination, destitution and the denial of rights. We have provided accessible, high-quality legal advice and support to tens of thousands of people, helping them to secure their immigration status, keep their families together and escape poverty. And we have consistently been one of the leading voices calling for a fairer, more just immigration system that works for everyone.

Support our work by becoming a member today, by visiting:

[jcwi.org.uk/join](https://jcwi.org.uk/join)

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