

# Research & Campaigns Bulletin

March 2025

citizens advice

Dorset

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Bournemouth  
Christchurch  
& Poole

## Dorset's Ageing Population:

### Caring for those who care for us

The care sector, and those who work within it, are under increasing pressure. Citizens Advice offices across Dorset have come together to share our concerns.

#### What's Happening?

In their recent 'Hidden Dorset' report\*, Dorset Community Foundation state that **15% of all employment in the county of Dorset is in healthcare**, and that this figure will **increase significantly** over the next few years due to **aging population**. The pressure on the care sector and the need for staff is increasing, but recruitment is difficult. Overseas recruitment is common, but there are **worrying trends of exploitation** for these carers. **Across Dorset, Citizens Advice offices have seen a seven-fold increase in issues for foreign carers over the last year**. These issues can result in destitution for carers, and exacerbates the shortage of valuable carers in our community.

#### Those who need care:

The challenges people are facing in our society are vast. **Loneliness and isolation are endemic** problems facing those who need care, making **interactions with carers a lifeline**. However, Citizens Advice offices across Dorset are **helping carers who are just as vulnerable as those they care for**, due to unscrupulous employers and the cost of living.

**"This is a health crisis we are just not seeing, because these workers are too scared to talk, isolated and vulnerable."**

#### Those who provide care:

Unison reports that 'Care staff who come to the UK from overseas are having to **share beds with other workers, sleep rough, and pay huge fees to work because of exploitation by rogue employers**'.\* This **matches experiences reported to Citizens Advice**. Poole MP Neil Duncan-Jordan is pushing for reform of the visa system which leaves workers in difficult circumstances.

\* <https://hidden.dorsetcommunityfoundation.org/>  
<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2025/02/migrant-care-staff-having-to-share-beds-sleep-rough-and-charged-thousands-in-illegal-fees/>

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## Caring for those who care for us: What can we do?



This is a public health issue affecting different types of people across our communities. **If you suspect that a carer is being exploited, support them and encourage them to seek help from trusted sources**, like Citizens Advice or ATLEU - the Anti-Trafficking & Labour Exploitation Unit.

### Linda's Story

Linda\* arrived in the UK in 2023 after successfully obtaining a Health & Care work visa. She was recruited by a UK based care company, registered with the CQC, and was asked to pay a fee of £12,000 for the company to provide her certificate of sponsorship to work here. Linda did not know that it was illegal for the company to ask for this money, which they told her was to cover the cost of a vehicle for her in the UK. Linda paid the company all of her savings to cover this cost. Linda was to be paid the minimum amount required for this type of visa when she obtained it, £23,200.

After arriving in the UK, Linda was not provided with a car. Linda's employer told her and the Home Office that she had been contracted to work 37 hours per week, but the company only provided shifts totalling 12 hours per week. As her visa prevents her from working in other types of jobs, Linda started falling further and further behind on her rent and bills. She is not entitled to claim benefits in the UK, and had sold everything in her home country to come here and care for people in our community who need help.

Linda and her 10 year old daughter are using foodbanks to eat, and cannot afford cost of living increases, such as the recent rise in energy costs. Linda is in a difficult position - she has nothing to return to in her home country, and just wants to work in the UK in the position she applied for. We advised Linda to report her sponsor to the Home Office, but she is scared to do this. She is worried about retaliation, and knows that her visa may be curtailed, and she will have lost everything.

\*Names and some details have been changed to protect anonymity.

Citizens Advice's information and advice is available to everyone - whoever they are, whatever their problem.

Dorset: Contact advice line on 0800 144 8848

BCP: Contact advice line on 0808 278 7939

