

NACSILS' DEMANDS FOR CARE WORKERS – LONG VERSION

BACKGROUND

Privatisation, austerity and lack of recognition of the knowledge, skills and dedication required for caring work have reduced the pay and conditions of care workers to a level which in no way reflects their value to society or those who need their care and support. Trade union membership has fallen with privatisation and many private providers will not recognise trade unions, leaving workers isolated and without a voice.

In 2020, over 80% of care workers in England were women. Over 20% were from black and ethnic minority backgrounds – more in London and other urban areas. 7% were from other EU countries, but this number has fallen following Brexit, contributing to the care crisis. 9% are non-EU citizens. New immigration rules are exacerbating the recruitment crisis in social care.

Many home care workers are not even paid the meagre statutory National Living Wage of £8.91pence an hour, often because they are not paid for travel or waiting time between visits. In contrast, average hourly pay for a car mechanic is £14.10 pence and £17.24 pence for a plumber. Many care workers have to provide their own cars and uniforms and receive no allowances for them. The work is often precarious, with up over 50% of home care workers on 'zero hours' contracts. Residential care workers are also poorly paid and are not paid full pay for their 'sleep in' time.

Underfunding, Covid, poor pay and working conditions, coupled with lack of proper training and respect have led to a crisis in social care. Turnover rates are very high - at 30%, with 112,000 vacancies. Inadequate time allocated to home visits and inadequate staffing levels leave many home care workers unable to give appropriate and necessary care and support and leave them demoralised and stressed.

WHAT NACSILS WANTS

NACSILS wants a properly funded, publicly- led care and support system which recognises and meets the diverse needs of its users, involving them in determining their needs and shaping services alongside care workers. It must foster and support independent living for those able to enjoy it. This requires a fair, new deal for the existing range of care workers – and for others in new jobs which should be created to meet the whole range of diverse needs.

It also means pay, pensions and conditions which recognise the skills, knowledge and responsibility involved in all care work and proper training to support and adequately equip care workers. It also means giving them time to care and support those they work with.

PAY AND CONDITIONS

NACSILS believes that care workers deserve pay, working conditions and pensions which match the complex tasks and relationships in their work and the crucial role they play in maintaining public health and wellbeing.

Average hourly earnings in the UK in 2020 were £15.14 pence. The 'real' Living Wage is currently £9.50 outside of London and £10.85 within it. Women are entitled to 'equal pay for work of equal value' under the 2010 Equality Act, but many equivalent 'men's' jobs are higher paid.

We want:

- All care workers on the National Living Wage to be immediately paid the 'real' Living Wage with no deductions – as a step towards appropriate, higher pay
- The whole range of care and support jobs to be independently evaluated by equal pay experts and compared to jobs requiring equivalent skills, knowledge and effort done by men
- A commitment from the Government that the level of pay suggested by independent evaluators should be funded and established as the required rate/s of pay
- All hours of work to be paid at full pay, including travel time between home visits and 'sleep ins' for residential workers
- All care workers to have occupational sick pay and holiday pay and access to good quality pensions
- Uniforms to be provided and paid for by employers
- Car / bicycle and other travel allowances where travel is required

HOURS OF WORK

Zero hours contracts leave many care workers vulnerable to pressure, withdrawal of work and fluctuating incomes. Others who are exempted from zero hours working often find that they are given unpopular twilight or night shifts which are difficult to combine with family and personal life.

We want:

- Recognition that most care workers are older women with family responsibilities who need regular and predictable hours
- The right to 'family friendly' flexible working
- Care workers to have the right to refuse zero hours contracts, without fear of reprisals and refusal of work
- Zero hours contracts to be phased out of all care work at the earliest opportunity
- Rotas to be agreed with workers and available with at least two weeks' notice

- Adequate time to be allocated to care and support and for the social needs of users to be met

TRADE UNION RIGHTS

As care work has been privatised, trade union membership has fallen, leaving workers without bargaining power or a collective voice. Many private providers refuse to recognise trade unions.

We want:

- Care providers to be required to recognise trade unions and negotiate with them
- Local authorities and care providers to directly involve trade unions – alongside those needing care and support – in developing a care service which genuinely meets the needs of users and recognises the vital contribution of workers

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training for many care workers is minimal and not even face-to-face. Many home care workers are given videos to train themselves in their own time – even for complex tasks like catheterisation and stoma care. There is little opportunity for career progression beyond a supervisor role because most home and residential care provision has been privatised. This means there is a very limited scope for building on care skills in other occupations or progressing into related public sector occupations.

We want:

- The complexity of care and support work to be reflected in a recognised system of training and qualifications, designed to equip workers to meet a diverse range of care and support needs and provide career enhancement and progression
- Training to be provided in work time and to be fully paid
- Government funding to establish an accredited network of education and training facilities

NACSILS' DEMANDS FOR CARE WORKERS – SHORT VERSION

Pay

- Basic pay at the level of the 'real' Living Wage - as a first step towards independently determined pay which truly reflects equal value with equivalent men's jobs
- Occupational sick pay, holiday pay and access to public sector pensions
- Full pay for travel and waiting time
- Adequate uniform, travel and other allowances

Working hours

- Recognition that most care workers are women with family responsibilities
- Family friendly' working patterns
- The right to refuse 'zero hours' contracts
- 'Zero hours' contracts to be phased out as soon as possible
- Rotas to be agreed two weeks in advance
- Adequate time allocated for proper care and support

Trade union rights

- All care providers should be required to recognise trade unions and negotiate with them
- Trade union involvement in developing a new care service which recognises the real needs of users and workers' contribution

Training and development

- A recognised system of training, qualifications and career development designed to meet the diverse range of care and support needs
- Training to be provided in work time and fully paid
- Government funding to establish an accredited network of education and training facilities