WM SOCIAL CARE
• International Recruitment •

International Recruitment Bulletin

Issue Number 9: Summer (September 2026)

WELCOME TO THE LATEST INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT E-BULLETIN!

As we enter the last six months of the West Midlands International Recruitment Programme, it is an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come, while recognising the significant policy and workforce changes that continue to affect adult social care.

LOOKING BACK

Over the past three years, the Programme has evolved from supporting ethical international recruitment into a broader programme of workforce support, partnership working and safeguarding.

Stories featured in this edition, including reflections from former Programme Director Gill Kelly, remind us how far things have developed. What started with colleagues reaching out to international care workers in local community settings grew into regular drop-ins, peer networks, regional support arrangements and a thriving community of practice across the West Midlands.

SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE

As the sector continues to adapt to change, our focus remains firmly on supporting both international care workers and the wider adult social care workforce.

Many of the challenges and opportunities are shared across the sector, including recruitment and retention, workforce development, induction and pastoral support, driving and transport, and creating rewarding careers in care.

Throughout the Programme, we have sought to share practical solutions, strengthen partnerships and support providers and workers to navigate change. As we move into the final year, that commitment remains unchanged.

LOOKING AHEAD

There is still much positive work taking place across the West Midlands. Local initiatives continue to make a difference, our webinars and Legal & HR Helpline remain available through the first quarter of 2027, and new opportunities such as the Skills for Care Workforce Strategy Impact Fund and the Innovation Fund will help strengthen workforce planning for the future.

In this edition, we celebrate the contribution of international care workers, share practical resources and support, highlight developments in workforce intelligence, and reflect on the legacy and learning of a programme built on partnership, collaboration and people.

LATEST POLICY UPDATE: IMMIGRATION RULES

Further changes to the Immigration Rules were announced by the Home Office at the beginning of September.

The changes affecting the Skilled Worker route add to an already changing landscape for adult social care employers and internationally recruited workers.

As the sector considers the implications, the West Midlands programme will continue to monitor the impact on workers, providers and local care markets, and share information and support as the position develops.

READ THE HOME OFFICE STATEMENT OF CHANGES (HC 584)

THIS MONTH, WE HAVE SEVERAL EXCITING UPDATES TO SHARE:

Shining a Spotlight on Care Workers: International care workers share their stories

International Recruitment & the Wider Workforce Picture

- Connecting international recruitment and wider workforce planning
- Using data to plan the future of adult social care
- WM-ADASS secures Skills for Care Impact Funding

Resources, Support & Stories from Care Providers

- Considering international recruitment? Hear from Esteemed Life Care
- Certificate of Sponsorship support
- Free HR and legal advice
- Webinar FAQs and upcoming events
- Innovation Fund: Supporting new approaches across the region

Safeguarding, Wellbeing & Key Support

Building Foundations for the Future

- Reflecting on three years of the International Recruitment Programme: Interview with Gill Kelly

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SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON CARE WORKERS

In their own words: international care workers share their stories

Behind the discussion about international recruitment are the people delivering care every day.

In a series of short videos, international care workers from Esteemed Life Care in Coventry share what brought them into adult social care, what motivates them and why they see caring as a skilled and rewarding profession.

Their stories highlight the patience and compassion involved in care, the relationships and trust built with the people they support, and the satisfaction that comes from making a difference.

The videos were produced as part of the West Midlands International Recruitment Programme, in partnership with Coventry City Council and Tulia.

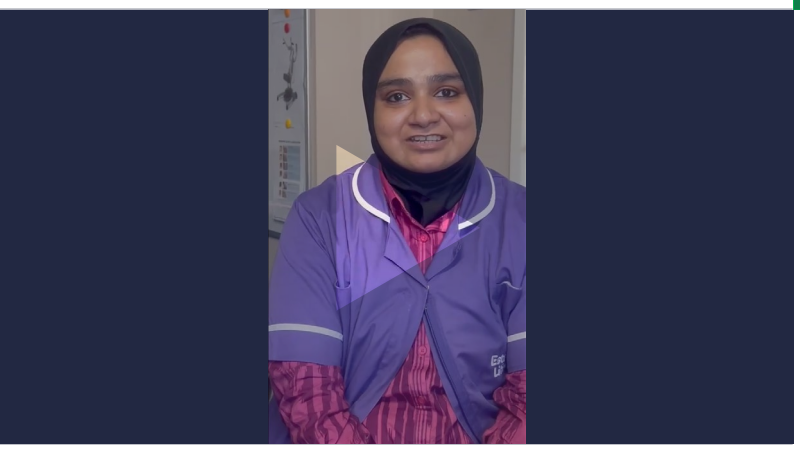
Watch the care workers share their stories below.

Patience, compassion and making a difference

International care workers at Esteemed Life Care reflect on why they chose a career in care, what they have learned and the sense of satisfaction that comes from supporting others.

What motivates me to care? Being there for someone matters

One international care worker shares a personal reflection on what motivates her – from caring and looking after someone to simply being there, listening and connecting.



The relationships at the heart of care: “Now I consider you as my daughter.”

A moving reflection on the relationships that can develop through care, and the trust, connection and companionship at the heart of adult social care.

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International Recruitment & the Wider Workforce Picture

International recruitment has been an important part of the West Midlands' response to adult social care workforce pressures, and increasingly connects with wider WM-ADASS activity on workforce intelligence, recruitment and retention, agency staffing and longer-term workforce planning.

WM-ADASS is bringing together workforce programmes, intelligence, networks and partnerships so that the region can tackle shared challenges collectively while retaining local flexibility. This includes work on recruitment and retention, agency workforce reform, market sustainability, policy and reform, workforce intelligence and longer-term workforce planning, alongside international recruitment.

The connections between these areas are increasingly important. Our International Recruitment Programme has supported councils, providers and international care workers, with a focus on skills, ethical recruitment and reducing vacancies and turnover. At the same time, the International Recruitment Data Dashboard has helped councils identify emerging risks such as provider pressures and sponsor licence revocations, supporting continuity of care and responses to displaced international care workers.

That intelligence is part of a bigger picture. WM-ADASS is developing its approach from retrospective reporting towards predictive workforce and market intelligence, bringing together workforce, market, commissioning, CQC, demographic and population data to help councils understand where shortages and vulnerabilities may emerge and where action and investment are needed.

International recruitment therefore remains an important strand of this workforce activity: combining data and evidence, practice and collaboration we aim to move from responding to immediate workforce pressures towards planning proactively for the workforce our communities will need in the future.

Read more about the WM-ADASS Social Care Workforce Partnership.

Coming soon in The MJ: Using data to plan the future of adult social care

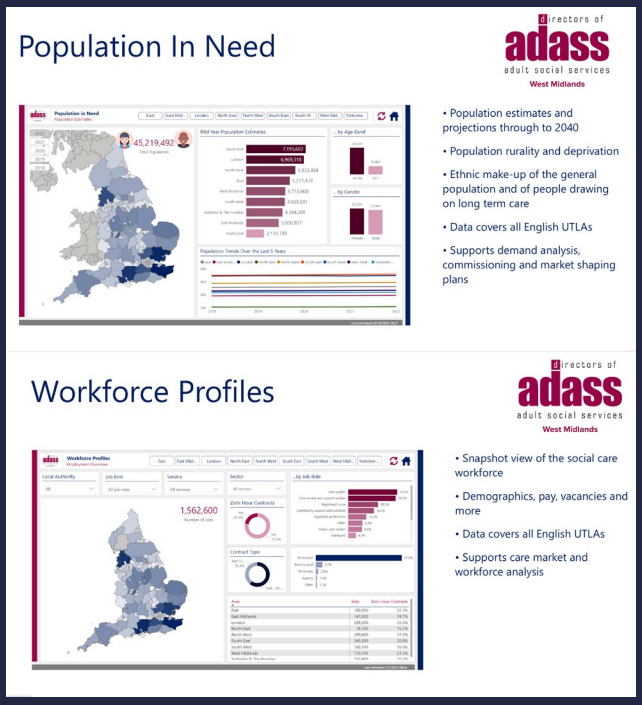
WM-ADASS Directors of Adult Social Services leads Hilary Hall and Pete Sidgwick will feature in The Municipal Journal later this month, exploring how better use of workforce and market intelligence can help adult social care anticipate pressures and plan for the future.

The article looks at how the WM-ADASS Adult Social Care Data Hub is evolving from reporting and benchmarking towards predictive intelligence. It highlights the International Recruitment Dashboard, which is helping councils identify provider pressures and sponsor licence revocations, support responses for displaced international care workers and identify risks earlier.

LOOK OUT FOR THE FULL ARTICLE IN THE MJ.

"By turning shared data into trusted intelligence, we can help develop the services, markets and workforce our communities need in the years ahead."

Hilary Hall, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing (DASS) at Herefordshire Council and DASS Workforce Lead



WM ADASS Secures Skills for Care Impact Funding

WM ADASS has secured funding through the Skills for Care Workforce Strategy Impact Fund to strengthen workforce and market intelligence across the West Midlands.

Building on the region's Data Hub, the programme will integrate workforce, market, demographic and demand data to support better long-term workforce planning, commissioning and market shaping.

Delivered in partnership with Skills for Care, the University of Birmingham, the Hartree Centre, West Midlands Care Association and Partners in Care, the project will develop predictive insight to help local systems anticipate future workforce pressures and support evidence-based decision-making. You can read more here.

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Sharing Impact: Coventry's Story

Coventry City Council has developed a new infographic showcasing the outcomes of its international recruitment support activity.

Bringing together workforce, community and provider impact in one place, it offers a practical example of how local authorities can evidence and communicate the difference their work is making.

As we increasingly focus on learning, legacy and workforce impact across the region, Coventry's approach provides a useful example of how local stories and outcomes can be captured and shared.

You can find out more information about what Coventry have done and download the infographic **here.**

Coventry City Council

Coventry City Council

Support to International Care Workers

Our Impact 2023-2026

1. **Supporting Local Care Providers**
   Over £74,000 distributed to the local care market to support re-deployment of displaced care workers.
2. **Supporting Community Organisations in the City**
   Over £55,000 awarded to Coventry's vibrant VCSE sector to support individuals and families affected by sponsorship licence revocations.
3. **Supported displaced workers into new jobs**
   Directly supporting 46 individuals many with dependent families into new roles with ethical employers in the City through coaching and job matching and one worker to reconnect with Nurse training at Nottingham Trent University.
4. **Providing safe, accessible support**
   With our community partners we delivered over 50 weekly drop-ins at a city centre venue providing free legal and employment support
5. **It's Your City Too!**
   Six "Connect with your Community" marketplace events linked individuals and families to Coventry's vibrant VCSE sector and local networks.
6. **Supporting Skills Development**
   Regular training events for international workers and a new "Pass Your Driving Test" webinar developed which was shared regionally.
7. **Improving Employability**
   St. Francis Employability, funded through our ADASS, grant delivered "Refresh your CV" sessions delivered to over international 60 workers.

Support to International Care Workers

What People told us …

"The council provided our care home with invaluable guidance and financial support to sponsor one of our employees … without this support it wouldn't have been possible" – ***Sara, Care Home Owner***

"Coventry Council helped me secure a new job at a care home with new sponsorship and a new beginning of life in the UK without asking for anything in return" – ***Eddie, International Care Worker***

"Coventry Council's support enabled a carer to continue working with my son which was important because the quality of support has been excellent. I would like to thank the team at the council for their support" – ***Mrs. S. Family Carer***

"Coventry Council have been brilliant in supporting our organisation with international recruitment. The team have been excellent in helping to identify the right candidates seeking new sponsorship" – ***Rafiq, Home Care Provider***

I will not fail to thank you for encouraging me during a traumatic time. God has helped me get to University and I am now a student nurse, your emotional and physical support went a long way for me – ***Carol, International Care Worker***

"Supporting our room hire costs for the drop-in made a real difference. It meant we could focus our limited budget on direct support rather than worrying about overhead. This flexible funding from the council and West Midlands ADASS genuinely helps" – ***Rumbi CEO, Tulia CIC***

"The CV session was helpful, especially the practical guidance on how to present my experience more clearly and tailor my CV to meet the requirements of every vacancy" – ***Elsie International Care Worker***

"The team were supportive, knowledgeable and approachable. They communicated clearly and created a comfortable environment to ask questions. The session was very interactive" - ***Michael International Care Worker***

IR@coventry.gov.uk

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RESOURCES, SUPPORT & STORIES FROM CARE PROVIDERS

Considering International Recruitment?

While new care workers can no longer be recruited directly from overseas into adult social care, there remains a valuable pool of international care workers already in the UK. This includes displaced workers seeking new employment and sponsorship, as well as people with the right to work through student, graduate or family visas — offering opportunities for care providers and local authorities supporting workforce capacity across their local care markets.

Consider recruiting via the Displaced Worker Pool?

"International recruits have helped immensely… they've been absolutely crucial."

Hear first-hand from Peter Beresford, Registered Manager at Esteemed Life Care in Coventry, about the difference international care workers have made to their workforce and the delivery of care.

Access support via the West Midlands IR Hub here www.irwestmids.co.uk/hire-sponsored-care-workers/

Help with Certificates of Sponsorship (COS)

We have had reports that the length of time securing Sponsorship remains a problem for both care providers and international care workers – we continue to provide feedback to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

Lifted has been supporting many providers through this process, helping them respond to detailed Home Office requests and avoiding common errors that can slow decisions down.

Local Authorities may also be able to support care providers' Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) applications and provide additional information to UKVI to help them with their decision making. however, the final decision is up to UKVI.

Find out more: https://irwestmids.co.uk/care-providers/#supporting-certificates

Free Legal & HR Help Ends March 2027 - Don't Miss Out

Our Legal & HR helpline, run by law firm Lester Aldridge, remains busy with many compliance related questions. This is available to all CQC registered care providers and local authorities in the West Midlands.

If you are a West Midlands based Local Authority or Care Provider and have an international recruitment related question, please email WMIRHelpline@lalaw.com

Providers and local authorities are entitled to 30 minutes FREE consultation in respect of a query.

All West Midlands International Care Workers who have been displaced or are at risk are also entitled to 30 minutes FREE consultation in respect of a query, until the end of March 2027. To access this support, international care workers living in the West Midlands need to register with the regional mailbox **www.revoked.support** and then request legal support

Missed our HR & Legal webinars? Catch up with the Frequently Asked Questions

Our recent HR & Legal webinars, delivered with Lester Aldridge, have explored some of the key sponsorship and Right to Work issues facing adult social care providers.

We've brought together the questions raised during the sessions and through our helpline in practical FAQ resources. They cover topics including Right to Work checks, pay and working hours, supplementary work, Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS), sponsor compliance and licence revocation, and what changes in circumstances can mean for sponsored workers.

Our next HR & Legal webinar takes place on the 22 October 2026 – it will focus on pay compliance. Register here.

Read the webinar FAQs and find further HR & Legal support on our website.

KEY SUPPORT IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

International Recruitment Hub:

This will provide access to resources and signpost international care workers, local authorities, and providers to relevant support.

My UK Life:

The online platform for international care workers to ask questions and access tailored signposting to support.

Legal & HR Webinars:

West Midlands Employers (WME), working with legal firm Lester Aldridge, will continue to deliver a series of webinars covering key legal issues for providers and local authorities (dates and topics to follow).

Job Matching via Lifted:

Lifted's job matching service, funded as part of the West Midlands International Recruitment Programme, gives West Midlands care providers direct access to displaced international care workers.

Tools to support you

Here is a reminder of some of the resources on our International Recruitment Hub's Ethical Recruitment page:

- **A Practical Guide: Choosing an Ethical Supplier**
- **Two audit tools that help you assess and choose ethical suppliers**
- **Right to Work Video**

These resources are designed to be simple, practical, and something you can use straight away, whether you're recruiting UK based international care staff or domestic staff.

You can access these resources via the International Recruitment Hub:

www.irwestmids.co.uk/resources-and-guidance/

Innovation Fund

As part of the International Recruitment Programme 2026–27, we have launched an Innovation Fund to support new and innovative approaches that build on learning from international recruitment and address wider adult social care workforce challenges.

The fund is open to ideas from voluntary, community and third-sector organisations, working in partnership with their local authority. Applications must be submitted by a local authority, so organisations with an idea are encouraged to get in touch with their local authority to explore bringing forward a proposal by the end of September.

We look forward to sharing details of the successful projects in our Winter bulletin.

Looking Beyond the Obvious

What does it take to recognise exploitation when it doesn't present itself as exploitation?

This question was at the heart of a recent West Midlands Exploitation Network discussion, bringing practitioners together from across the region to share learning about hidden vulnerability, professional curiosity and partnership working.

A clear message emerged: look beyond the presenting issue. Exploitation can sit beneath concerns involving housing, substance misuse, mental health, safeguarding, anti-social behaviour and employment – and no single agency will necessarily hold the whole picture.

Practitioners highlighted three things we can all do differently: start with welfare and build trust; ask curious questions and connect the intelligence; and don't assume another agency has acted – follow up.

As Debbie Huxton from Sandwell Council reminded colleagues, sometimes the most powerful starting point is also the simplest: "Tell me your story."

The full reflection explores the learning from the session and sets out a collective call to action for local authorities and partners across the West Midlands.

"Tell me your story... When people feel safe in your energy, and feel that it is a non-judgemental space, that's when they start to share."

Debbie Huxton,
Modern Slavery and Violence Prevention Programme Manager, Sandwell Council

Click here to read the full piece and practical actions we can take together.

BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

How can the experiences of the past three years help shape the future of adult social care?

We caught up with Gill Kelly as she prepared to leave her role as Director of the West Midlands International Recruitment Programme. Together, we reflected on the Programme's journey, the challenges faced along the way, and the lessons that could help shape the future of adult social care.

What began as a response to workforce shortages became a programme focused on ethical employment, partnership working, tackling exploitation and ensuring international care workers remained at the heart of decision-making.

In this two-part series you'll discover:

- How the Programme evolved to meet changing national policy and workforce challenges.
- Why collaboration between local authorities, care providers, community organisations and national partners became one of its greatest strengths.
- The lasting impact of supporting displaced international care workers through practical, ethical and innovative approaches.
- Key lessons for the future, including how the Programme's learning can strengthen the wider adult social care workforce.

"Over the last three years, the Programme has challenged assumptions, responded to changing circumstances, amplified the voices of international care workers and demonstrated the power of working together."

Gill Kelly

Watch Gill Kelly talk about the Programme

The interview also explores the human stories behind the Programme, the importance of ethical recruitment and why many of the lessons learned have relevance far beyond international recruitment. Whether you're a care provider, local authority colleague or partner organisation, there are valuable insights to take away.

Read the series

Part One:

How the West Midlands International Recruitment Programme Adapted to Change

Explore how the Programme developed, responded to changing policy, supported displaced workers and tackled exploitation.

Part Two:

Collaboration, Learning and Legacy

Discover the partnerships, personal stories and workforce lessons that could help shape the future of adult social care.

Read both articles to explore the achievements, challenges and lasting legacy of a programme that has helped shape a more ethical, collaborative and people-centred approach to workforce development.