

Creating a Sustainable Adult Social Care Workforce:

International Recruitment 24/25 in the West Midlands Learning & Evaluation

September 2025

Dr Kathryn Hudson PhD
West Midlands ADASS Associate

'Working in care is something I am truly passionate about. I love that every day is different—I get to meet new people and support adults and the elderly, treating them with the same care and respect I would give my own family. I listen to their stories, honour their wishes, and provide personal care to help them live fulfilling lives. My experience in care has inspired me to pursue mental health nursing, and I hope to build on this foundation to work in the mental health sector in the future. Supporting people with learning disabilities and young adults has been especially rewarding for me, and I find real fulfilment in making a positive difference in their lives'.

Adanna, International care worker

For many, international recruitment began with hope....



"I came to the UK because I wanted to care. It was my dream job."

- A promise of a **steady job**, a chance to build a **new life**, and the opportunity to **contribute to a sector that desperately needed people**.
- In 2022, the health and care visa opened a door to social care workers. Thousands stepped through it. **They left their families, invested their savings, and arrived ready to work.**



1. Executive Summary

The West Midlands International Recruitment (IR) Programme 2024/25 represents a regionally coordinated response to the growing challenges in adult social care workforce sustainability. Funded by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), the programme focused on ethically supporting displaced international care workers into new employment, strengthening safeguarding, and embedding ethical recruitment practices across the region.

The Double Diamond design approach was used to tackle international recruitment as a complex issue across the adult social care sector. Through the 4 phases of the design — Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver—the programme was able to focus on the people it wanted to reach, was collaborative in design to gain the best solutions, iterative in testing and learning about the model, and transparent in sharing the development of the model through the governance of the programme. This report is written to describe the development of the programme using the 4 phases of design for each section. Having identified systemic issues in international recruitment, including unethical practices, visa revocations, and workforce displacement, West Midlands ADASS and its partners developed a multi-layered support model combining regional infrastructure (Regional mailbox, IR Hub, Lifted job-matching platform, My UK Life AI support tool) with local authority-led initiatives (collaborations with Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and local third-sector organisations).

Key achievements include:

- **Support Delivered:** 3,505 support requests handled; 273 displaced workers placed into new employment
- **Digital Innovation:** Over 9,000 unique users accessed the IR Hub; Launch of *My UK Life* (AI-driven support platform) and *Lifted* (job-matching service), supporting over 1,000 and 3,266 users respectively
- **Provider Engagement:** 284 care providers expressed interest in recruiting displaced workers; 178 registered with Lifted
- **Training & Webinars:** 360 attendees across webinars; 544 care providers registered for ongoing support
- **Safeguarding Leadership:** Regional Safeguarding focus and partnership with Sandwell Council led modern slavery prevention efforts, including strategic planning and training

The programme's impact has been both operational and strategic—enhancing workforce resilience, informing national policy, and offering scalable models for ethical recruitment, safeguarding, and community integration. Lessons learned from international recruitment are applicable to domestic workforce challenges, especially around onboarding, community integration, and safeguarding. Platforms like *My UK Life* and *Lifted* demonstrate the potential

of AI and self-service models in workforce support, and the partnerships with CABs, faith groups, and third-sector organisations demonstrate the importance of community integration for care workers.

2. Discover: Understanding the Challenge

This discover section explores the background, context, challenges, and drivers behind international recruitment and adult social care workforce issues. It includes a narrative on the policy shifts and the ethical concerns that emerged following the launch of the skilled worker visa route for care workers and senior care workers.

2.1 Background and Context to West Midlands International Recruitment Programme

The West Midlands International Recruitment programme was established in 2023 in response to securing a DHSC grant to support adult social care providers to ethically recruit international care workers, due to the rising number of vacancies across the sector and the impact on social care provision. In 2022/23, (Skills for Care, 2024). estimated a 9.9% vacancy rate across adult social care in England, and 9.6% (c. 15,000 vacant posts) in West Midlands.

This is the 3rd learning and evaluation report of the West Midlands International Recruitment programme [Learning & Evaluation Reports](#). This report is focused on the work carried out during 2024/2025 against the objectives of the DHSC grant for the same period. The objectives of the DHSC grant in 24/25 reflected the growing concern about the number of international care workers that had been unethically recruited and found to be displaced from their sponsorship organisation, leaving them at risk of breaching the sponsorship visa requirements, potentially destitute and at risk of deportation. The 24/25 objectives focused on identifying and supporting displaced international care workers into new employment in adult social care.

The interim report for 24/25 was published in January 2025 providing a description of the regional International Recruitment model. This report reviews the experience of the implementation of the regional model during 24/25, and in addition considers the learning across the full two years of the programme and how the learning can be effectively used to inform and support the wider adult social care workforce agenda.

Collectively the Learning and Evaluation reports of the West Midlands International Recruitment programme tell the story of the experience of working in collaboration to tackle the complex environment for workforce challenges in adult social care.

2.2 Workforce Strategy and Policy Landscape for Adult Social Care in England

During the Summer of 2024, a new Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England was published ([Social Care Workforce Strategy](#)). The strategy was the first to be developed by the sector for the sector, led by Skills for Care – the workforce development body for adult social

care in England - in collaboration with local authorities, care providers, Care Quality Commission (CQC), representatives of care workers, Local Government Association (LGA), Association Directors of Adult Social Care (ADASS), Integrated Care Boards, people with lived experience, and other health and education organisations. The 15-year workforce strategy was designed to ensure that there were enough people in the social care workforce with the right skills, qualifications and training to meet the future population forecast demand for social care. The strategy mirrored the triple aims of the NHS Workforce Strategy (NHS Workforce Plan 2023), attraction and retention, training and transformation to emphasise the important contribution that social care provides to the economy and health of the nation. In July 2025, 12-months on, the Social Care Workforce Strategy recommendations were reviewed and updated to reflect the changing context with the publication of the NHS 10-year plan, setting out how social care is part of the solution in the shifts from analogue to digital, hospital to community, and sickness to prevention. The recommendations come under the following headings and themes, with the full recommendations available online ([Social Care Workforce Strategy](#)):

1) Attract and Retain

- Pay & conditions
- Career progression
- International recruitment
- Workplace culture
- Retention strategies

2) Train

- Skills development
- Qualifications
- Leadership
- Training Infrastructure

3) Transform

- Workforce planning
- Technology & innovation
- Integrated Care Systems
- Equity & coproduction

This report will review the learning from the West Midlands International Recruitment programme and assess how the work aligns with and could further inform and support the Social Care Workforce recommendations moving forward. The national adult social care workforce strategy was developed in response to the significant workforce challenges in the sector, which are described here for further context.

Adult social care has been facing significant workforce challenges since before the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic and changes for access to the European workforce from the UK leaving the European Union, negatively impacted the recruitment and retention of social care

workers, which led to the inclusion of care workers to the Shortage Occupation List in February 2022. This policy change enabled social care employers to sponsor overseas care workers on the health and care skilled worker visa route.

From February 2022, the number of international care workers significantly increased and outstripped forecasts by the Home Office. In just 12 months up to October 2023, the Home Office had issued over 130,000 care worker visa applications against a forecast of up to 40,000 ([Inspection of the Immigration system 2023](#)).

In February 2023, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched the International Recruitment Fund to support regional partnerships to increase the number of international care workers into adult social care and to improve ethical recruitment practice across the sector.

West Midlands applied for the grant in 2023 and established regional support for ethical recruitment for care providers during 2023/24. Most care providers are SME's (small and medium enterprises), with limited access to legal and Human Resource support. West Midlands established a partnership with West Midlands Employers and local authorities, to develop an International Recruitment hub offering advice and support on ethical recruitment practice to social care providers across the region, training for international recruits, and pastoral care and support to help international care workers to settle in the UK. The West Midlands International Recruitment programme 23/24 was reviewed and documented in Learning and Evaluation Reports ([Learning & Evaluation Reports](#)).

During 23/24, West Midlands ADASS International Recruitment programme began to note examples of unethical recruitment practice taking place in adult social care by recruitment agencies and care providers, leading to increasing reports of international care workers that were brought to the UK on a skilled worker visa, but who were either unsuitable for care work or were not being provided with care work to meet their skilled worker visa and/or to support their daily living requirements. West Midlands ADASS created a regional database to support local authorities with intelligence about care providers with sponsorships for international care workers, to enable targeting of support.

Nationally, Home Office and DHSC, had started to identify increasing levels of compliance issues, with the skilled care worker and senior care worker visas, through problems identified in sponsors compliance visits, and increasing reports of modern slavery, bondage and destitution in international care workers ([Inspection of the Immigration System 2023](#)).

UKVI contacted West Midlands International Recruitment programme about the suspension and revocation of sponsorship licences of care providers. It was apparent that these suspensions and revocations would have an impact on the care market across the region and would impact care providers ability to provide services. During 23/24, the region started to flex the programme to support international care workers identified to be in challenging situations, and to target care providers at risk of suspension and revocation.

In March 2024, policy restrictions were added to the health and care visa route in part to respond to the unethical practice that had been identified, only allowing CQC-regulated employers to sponsor care workers, the salary threshold was increased for newly sponsored health and care worker visa holders and dependents were no longer able to accompany or join care workers or senior care workers. The code of practice for international recruitment for health and social care workers [Code of Practice International Workers](#) was updated to prohibit recruitment from red list countries unless by direct application and banned recruitment agencies from charging fees to applicants.

The DHSC launched the 24/25 grant scheme to respond to increasing unethical practice reports and to target the support to re-deploy displaced international care workers.

In October 2024, Skills for Care ([Skills for Care Oct 24](#)) reported that international recruitment had largely driven improvements in the adult social care workforce in year to March 2024, but that the sector continued to experience domestic recruitment and retention challenges. The social care workforce grew, and vacancies fell for the 2nd year in a row. The turnover rate decreased and the number of males in social care roles increased, and the data was indicating that this was because of international recruitment. Despite these improvements, the vacancy rate remained higher in adult social care compared to other sectors. The policy changes introduced in March 2024 was starting to show in reductions in international recruitment to adult social care. Domestic recruitment and retention remained challenging, and with potential for the UK phasing out of international recruitment to adult social care, alternative solutions were needed to meet the population forecasts for increasing demand for social care over the next 10 to 15 years ([CMO Report 2023](#)).

Pressure was building politically in 24/25 about immigration into the UK, and on 12 May 2025, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced the government's new immigration strategy in the [White Paper: Restoring Control over the Immigration System May 2025](#). A central measure in the white paper was the planned closure of the Health and Care Skilled Worker visa route for adult social care roles, which came into force on 22nd July 2025.

This move was described as a response to the exploitation under the skilled worker visa system, as well as a desire to reduce long-term reliance on low-paid international labour, and the expressed need to rebalance workforce policy towards sustainable domestic solutions.

Alongside the closure of the visa route, the white paper commits to the introduction of a Fair Pay Agreement (FPA) for the adult social care sector in England, with legislation expected in 2026, with a likely phased implementation.

This change in policy represented a structural shift for the national workforce adult social care strategy. In the short term, the removal of international recruitment capacity risks significant workforce disruption, particularly for home care and residential services in areas of high vacancies. Population forecasts indicate that there are likely to be increasing pressures for adult social care services, and particular pressures in rural and coastal areas ([CMO Report 2023](#)).

The new immigration rules in effect from 22 July 2025 mean that care providers can no longer recruit care or senior care workers from overseas. A transition period is now in effect until 22nd July 2028, during which care workers and senior care workers already in the UK on a health and care visa can:

- Renew their visa with current employer
- Switch sponsors within the care sector
- Be promoted from care worker to senior care worker and apply for a new visa

Care providers can also still assign undefined Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS) to eligible individuals already in the UK, including students, graduates, or dependents, if they have been employed in a care role by the sponsoring provider for at least 3 months. Those already on a health and care visa do not need to meet the 3-month requirement when changing jobs. ([New Immigration Rules July 2025](#)). After July 2028 no new entrants from other visa routes will be permitted, although existing health and care visas will remain valid.

The inclusion of students and graduates is significant for the care sector, as just under 40% (48,500) of people who moved from the student study visa route to a skilled worker route in 2024 became a care worker or senior care worker ([Migration Observatory July 2025](#)).

The changing policy landscape for international recruitment in the adult social care sector during 24/25 was significant and provides important context for the response by West Midlands to define the problem it was seeking to answer in the development of the International Recruitment model in response to the DHSC grant objectives.

3. Define: Clarifying the Problem

But Hope Met Reality...



“I paid thousands in fees, and then one day the company lost its licence. I had nothing.”

- But hope met reality. When sponsorship licences were revoked, **people found themselves suddenly without work, their visa status in question, their futures uncertain.** Many had borrowed heavily or sold land and possessions to secure the role.
- Some spoke of sleeping on friends' floors, relying on foodbanks, or being told to pay even more money to be “rescued” from their situation. **The system that promised stability sometimes delivered exploitation.**



This define section describes and clarifies the specific problems to be addressed by the International Recruitment programme as defined by the DHSC grant criteria and objectives for 24/25, and the assessment of what support would be needed across West Midlands to meet the objectives.

Programme Objectives & Outcomes 24/25

The DHSC grant for International Recruitment in 24/25 was focused on:

- Facilitating in-country matching of overseas recruits who have been displaced because of unethical employment practices
- Partnerships with care alliances and other groupings including overseas recruits with lived experience in the area
- Delivery partnerships with care alliances and other stakeholders
- Strengthening ethical employment practices in international recruitment and the employment of staff working in adult social care
- Supporting approaches to prevent modern slavery

These high-level objectives were developed by West Midlands Region into objectives at regional level with external delivery partners to provide regional support, and with local authorities to provide local support:

3.1 Ethical Recruitment & Employment

- Promote ethical recruitment practices and prevent modern slavery.
- Ensure displaced international recruits are matched with compliant, ethical care providers.
- Support providers in becoming licensed sponsors and maintaining compliance.

3.2 Support for Displaced International Recruits

- Establish a regional response team to triage and support displaced workers within 60 days of license revocation.
- Provide tailored support based on triage categories (Green, Amber, Red) to guide employment pathways.
- Offer access to pastoral care, buddying schemes, and hardship support.

3.3 Digital Innovation & AI-Enabled Support

- Deploy AI platform to deliver hyper-localised information, advice, and guidance on:
 - Working in the UK: job search, CV/interview prep, rights, training, and reporting unethical practices.
 - Living in the UK: housing, health, immigration, financial advice, and safeguarding.
 - Ensure the platform is user-friendly, data-driven, and rapidly deployable.

3.4 Data Management & Reporting

- Develop Customer Relationship Management (CRM) modules, online forms, and databases for IR licenses and vacancies.
- Monitor displaced individuals' journeys from revocation to re-employment.
- Provide analytics on platform usage, triage outcomes, and training uptake.

3.5 Stakeholder Collaboration & Communication

- Coordinate across West Midlands Care Association, PIC, SARCP, and local authorities to ensure consistent regional delivery.
- Deliver provider engagement events, job fairs, and communication campaigns.
- Share learning and evaluation insights locally, regionally, and nationally.

3.6 Training & Workforce Development

- Provide access to training resources for displaced individuals.
- Support providers with advice and training to enhance retention and enable ethical recruitment.

3.7 Expected Outcomes

Area	Outcome
Matching & Employment	Displaced IRs triaged and matched with suitable care providers within 60 days.
Digital Platform Use	High engagement with digital platforms; measurable improvements in user knowledge and confidence.
Provider Engagement	Increased number of providers with sponsorship licenses; active participation in job fairs and training.

Data & Evaluation	Real-time analytics on displaced individuals, provider vacancies, and programme impact.
Training Access	Uptake of training by displaced workers; care providers; improved job readiness; improved employment practices.
Regional Consistency	Centralised response ensures equitable support across all local authorities.

4. Develop: Designing the Response

The develop section describes the response to the problem and the design of the West Midlands International Recruitment model to address the challenges and the objectives set out by DHSC.

The development phase took place between April and December 2024 and was detailed in the West Midlands ADASS Interim Learning Report for 24/25 ([WM IR Interim Learning Report Jan 25](#)).

This section does not repeat the detail of the development of the West Midlands International Recruitment model that is available in the interim report and describes in summary the core components of the model for ease of context. Readers are signposted to the interim report for further information.

West Midlands International Recruitment Model

The core components of the West Midlands International Recruitment model included:

Regional Support

- Regional mailbox – managed by West Midlands Care Association as the first point of contact for displaced international care workers directed to the region via the Home Office. The mailbox provided a contact and triage approach to signpost displaced international care workers to the range of offers of support available across the West Midlands.
- West Midlands International Recruitment Hub– managed by West Midlands Employers on behalf of the programme, to provide detailed information and signposting to the range of offers and support for care providers, councils and displaced international care workers. The Hub included legal and HR support for care providers and displaced international care workers, tools for support on ethical recruitment, and a range of webinars on key topics to respond to the changing context for international recruitment in adult social care. The Hub was significantly developed from the 23/24 hub to expand the connections for the whole International

Recruitment model.

- My UKLife – AI-driven digital self-service platform offering multi-lingual support to displaced care workers on employment, housing, visa requirements, financial advice and support, health, community and social support.
- Lifted (Sponsors switch) – Online job-matching platform to connect displaced international care workers with ethical employers.
- Safeguarding and Modern Slavery support – a dedicated safeguarding advisor to support delivery partners and local authorities in identifying and responding to safeguarding and exploitation risks.

Local Support

- Each of the 14 West Midlands local authorities received funding to appoint an IR Lead and to record and respond to requests for local displaced worker support. This was a key feature of the regional model to provide collaboration on the work between regionally commissioned support and local initiatives.
- Further enhanced levels of support were provided by 8 local authorities across the region focusing on a range of support and practice including:
 - Mapping care provider markets and risk.
 - Developing Quality Assurance processes to identify and support providers with international care workers.
 - Creating local databases of displaced workers.
 - Partnering with community and faith groups to offer pastoral support, discrete support, networks, and employment opportunities.
 - Offering bespoke training (e.g., Warwickshire's English language programme).
 - Safeguarding and modern slavery interventions (e.g., Sandwell's dedicated post).

5. Deliver: Implementing and Evaluating

The deliver section reviews the learning gained across delivery of the West Midlands International Recruitment model during 24/25. The learning and evaluation are based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data was collected through regular meetings with the delivery partners and IR local leads, through project team meetings and IR programme steering group meetings, interviews with international care workers and visits to local engagement and support events held for international care workers.

The impact of the programme is evaluated against the DHSC grant objectives, and the national workforce strategy recommendations for adult social care. This provides insight into how the learning from this regional programme can contribute to and inform the wider issues relating to adult social care, particularly the workforce strategy, future policy, and operational challenges for adult social care.

The quantitative data has been collated across 24/25 for the key aspects of the model and in line with the DHSC data requirements for the grant. Additional data was collated by the region to inform the learning and evaluation. The process for data collection is shown in figure 1.

WM IR Model Data Collection Process



Figure 1. West Midlands IR Data Collection process

5.1 High-Level Data and Impact:

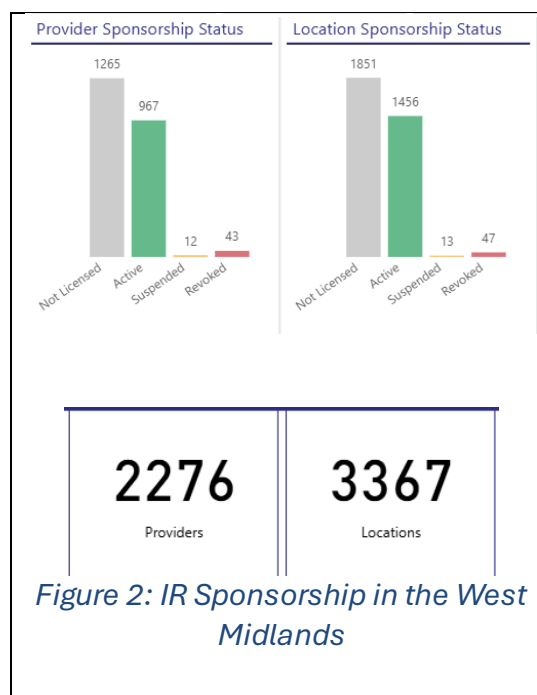
High-level data shows the context of the adult social care market in West Midlands, and the employment of international care workers. It provides the data on the care market compliance with the requirements for Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS) licences, and the experience of licence suspensions, revocations and numbers of displaced international care workers in the West Midlands during 24/25.

Contextual Information: Data on the scale of international recruitment, sponsorship activity, number and percentage of sponsors registered in the West Midlands, and the number of locations associated with sponsor organisations.

The ASC market in the West Midlands region includes 3,376 CQC-registered care locations, which are operated by 2,276 registered care providers (source: CQC Active Care Directory).

There are 967 providers (42.5% of the market) who hold an active IR sponsorship licence, with 1,456 locations (43.2%) associated with these providers (source: Home Office Register of Licenced Sponsors, as matched to CQC Active Care Directory) (see Figure 2).

This represents an increase of 250 licenced sponsors in the region since September 2023.



West Midlands care locations report employing **12,514** holders of skilled worker visas (representing 11.7% of the care worker workforce). Of these, 3,776 international care workers are employed in care homes (representing 7.9% of the care home workforce) with a further 8,738 employed in homecare (14.6% of the homecare market) (source: NECS Capacity Tracker, August 2025).

In its annual assessment of the local care market, Skills for Care estimates that there were 11,000 International Care Workers employed in the West Midlands in March 2024¹, with rapid growth in overseas recruitment from 2021/22 (Figure 3). This is broadly in line with the latest Capacity Tracker submissions.



¹ [A summary of the adult social care sector and workforce in the West Midlands](#), 2023/24, Skills for Care,

Compliance Data: Information on the number of sponsors subject to compliance actions (suspension, revocation, reinstatement) and the number of certificates of sponsorship associated with these actions.

UKVI have initiated compliance action against 76 West Midlands-based sponsors in the period from 1st April 2024 to 31st July 2025. There were 45 sponsorship licences suspended and 49 licence revocations in this period, with 20 sponsors subsequently having their licences reinstated. As at the end of July 2025 there were 8 sponsors still under suspension and 48 whose licences are revoked.

Figure 4 summarises revocations data, including the number of Certificates of Sponsorship associated with licence revocations.

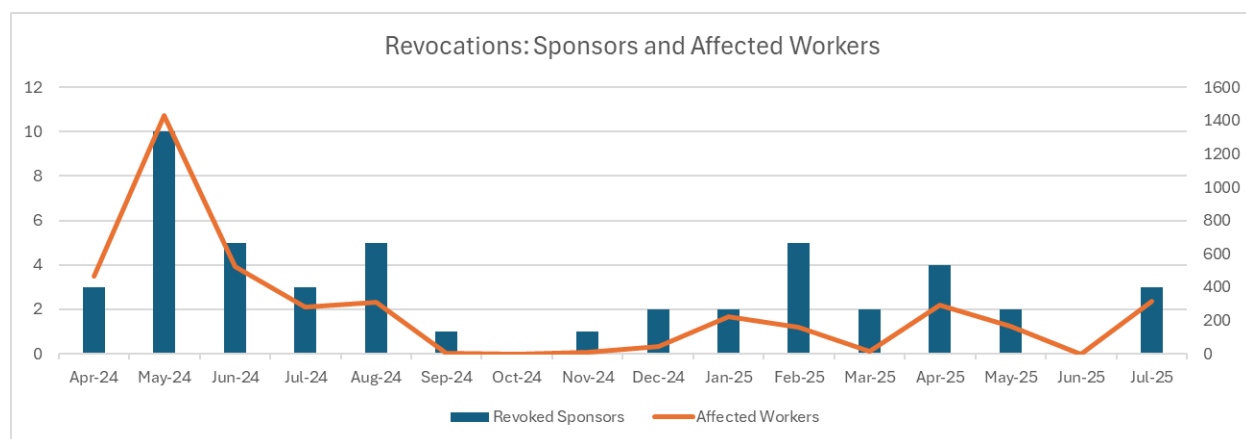


Figure 4: Revocations timeline

There are 4,251 Certificates of Sponsorship associated with licence revocations affecting West Midlands providers between April 2024 and July 2025 – potentially 4,251 care workers who will lose their right to work unless they can find alternative sponsorship before their visas are cancelled by the Home Office. A further 294 workers are associated with sponsors under suspension at the end of July 2025, increasing the number of West Midlands care workers ‘at risk’ of visa curtailment to over 4,500.

Compliance action - Local Authority Impact

UKVI issues a stakeholder notification each time it takes action to suspend, revoke or reinstate a sponsorship licence. Stakeholder notifications are sent by the regional partnership to the Local Authority in whose area the sponsor is registered, advising them to assess the level of risk and impact on local care provision and to consider contingency planning. This can involve LAs in multi-agency intelligence-sharing, quality assurance visits and an assessment of the potential impacts for people who draw on care and support provided by affected workers, care provider viability, market capacity and visa curtailment.

Headline information is also shared with all local authorities in the region so they can assess any local impacts and pass on any intelligence about cross-boundary provision to the host LA.

Figure 5 provides a timeline showing suspension and revocation notices received between April 2024 and July 2025, organised by the host local authority. Birmingham (with 20 notifications), Stoke on Trent and Wolverhampton (both with 12 notifications) have been affected most by compliance activity whilst Solihull (1), Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin (all with 2 notifications) have been least directly affected. However, as the region's intelligence sharing protocol requires that all notifications are summarised and shared across the region, all LAs are involved in some level of enquiry in respect of every notification received.

	2024												2025												Totals									
Compliance Action	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev	Sus	Rev								
Birmingham	1	1		1		1		1		1	1				3		1	1	1	2	1	2		1	1		1		10	10				
Coventry	1				2	1		1		1							1	1											4	4				
Dudley							1				1										1								2	1				
Herefordshire	1											1															1	1	1	1				
Sandwell	1	1		2										1								1	1			1	2	6						
Shropshire											1					1												1	1					
Solihull										1																		0	1					
Staffordshire		1		2															1									1	5					
Stoke on Trent	1			2			1		2	1					1	1			1								4	9						
Telford & Wrekin											1																	1	1					
Walsall	1			1				1				1									1							3	4					
Warwickshire			1																									3	0					
Wolverhampton				2	1	3		1			1			2					1						1			1	3	9				
Worcestershire											1								1							1		2	2					
Totals	6	3	1	10	3	5	2	3	4	5	2	1	1	0	3	1	0	2	6	2	2	5	2	2	1	4	1	2	3	0	5	3	42	48

Figure 5: Compliance Notices received

It is recognised that Revocation notices have the greatest impact on LA workloads, requiring full consideration of continuity of care, commissioning, workforce capacity and care market risks as well as triggering the start of the region's support offer to affected workers.

Certificates of Sponsorship associated with revoked sponsors are summarised in Figure 6. This shows high numbers of affected workers in the first five months of 2024, followed by a lull in activity between September and December 2024, with revocations rising and continuing throughout 2025. Revoked sponsors from Staffordshire, Sandwell and Wolverhampton have the highest number of affected workers, whilst Warwickshire, Solihull and Herefordshire have the fewest.

	2024												2025												Totals	
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul										
Birmingham	195	2	48		75								19	13	35	99									486	
Coventry			115	73	151								27												366	
Dudley															88										88	
Herefordshire																	10								10	
Sandwell	150	317							43							69									818	
Shropshire										44															44	
Solihull						2																			2	
Staffordshire	123	541								177	4														845	
Stoke on Trent		342			22																				364	
Telford & Wrekin								12																	12	
Walsall		111		168					3						167										449	
Warwickshire																									0	
Wolverhampton		120	358	38	62								88				69								735	
Worcestershire					2								24												26	
Totals	468	1433	521	279	312	2	0	12	46	221	162	13	290	168	0	318									4245	

Figure 6: Revocations and Affected Workers

Activity Data: Data on the number of displaced workers requesting support, expressions of interest from providers in recruiting displaced workers, and detailed activity metrics such as the number of candidate profiles considered, interviews conducted, job offers made, and jobs taken up.

The West Midlands programme ran an IR mailbox pilot between May and July 2024, when UKVI wrote to 760 visa holders employed by two West Midlands-based sponsors whose licences had been revoked in February 2024. UKVI correspondence encourages displaced workers to contact the regional mailbox for support, with 112 support requests being received from 112 workers between 13th May and 10th August 2024. Of these, 77 were from care workers living in the West Midlands and 35 requests were from people living outside of the region.

The West Midlands mailbox was formally extended to all displaced workers on 1st November 2024 as part of a national rollout plan, with UKVI letters sent to a total of 2,941 displaced workers from 50 sponsors registered in the West Midlands whose licences had been revoked between 1st November and 31st December 2024. UKVI has subsequently contacted a further 715 employees from 16 newly revoked West Midlands sponsors between January and July 2025.

In total the West Midlands mailbox has handled 3,505 support requests in the 15 months from May 2024 to July 2025:

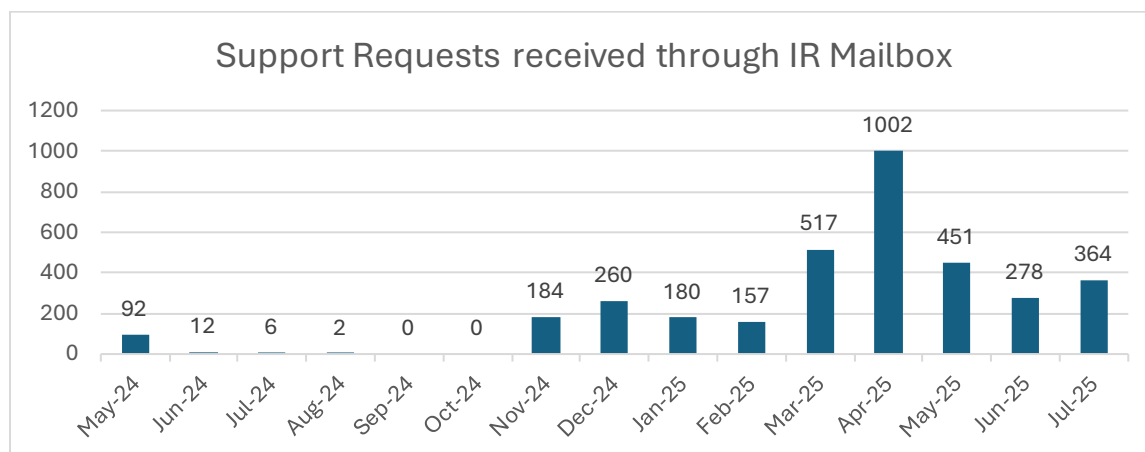


Figure 7: Mailbox activity – requests for support

This shows a significant peak in activity in the period leading up to the Immigration white paper in May 2025, when information about forthcoming changes in the immigration rules were widely known or anticipated.

Whilst most support requests are received because of UKVI compliance action, there are increasing numbers of requests from workers affected by unethical or exploitative practice, or as a result of their sponsor facing commercial pressures. Figure 8a shows the increasing

proportion of “other” reasons whilst Figure 8b provides further detail about the reasons for seeking support:

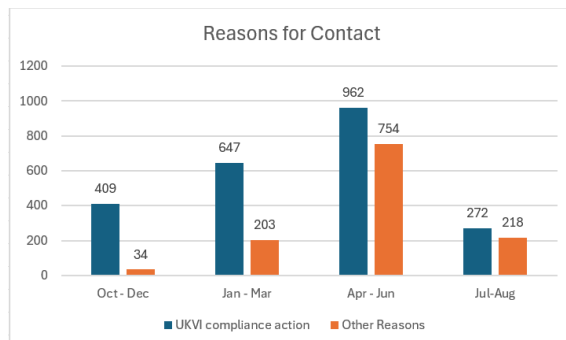


Figure 8a: Changes in the reason for contact

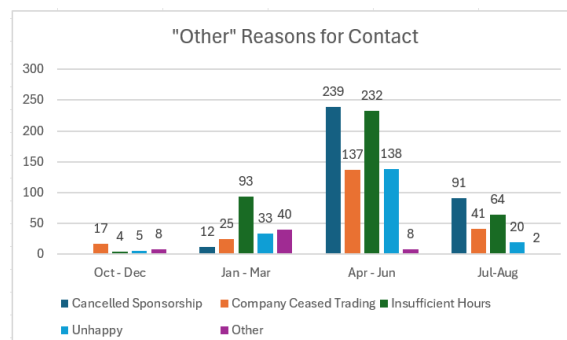


Figure 8b: Contact other than compliance

Analysis of the support requests received shows that workers often don't live in the same LA area as the sponsor's registered location. Figure 9 shows where displaced workers seeking support from the regional programme live, with the greatest impact (in terms of displaced worker support) being experienced in Birmingham (750 support requests), Coventry (500) and Wolverhampton (373).

	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Grand Total
Birmingham	5	3	2				38	50	30	24	99	248	110	59	82	750
Coventry	34	3		1			46	23	18	29	80	151	54	28	33	500
Dudley	0	1					2	7	4	5	15	37	11	12	7	101
Herefordshire	1	0						1	1	3	1	4	2	1	1	15
Sandwell	5	1					13	14	8	7	25	61	34	13	29	210
Shropshire	0	0						1		1	4	5	3	1	4	19
Solihull	0	0						1	1			4	3	5	1	15
Staffordshire	2	0		1			3	5	3	4	12	30	27	11	8	106
Stoke-on-Trent	2	0					11	27	18	18	42	91	31	27	35	302
Telford and Wrekin	1	0					7	6	16	2	26	32	15	10	14	129
Walsall	4	0					5	12	7	4	29	63	31	12	14	181
Warwickshire	0	0					8	4	3	3	30	30	8	8	7	101
Wolverhampton	9	0	2				22	38	18	16	56	96	50	24	42	373
Worcestershire	0	0					7	4	2	1	10	18	6	8	11	67
Out of Area	29	4	2				22	67	51	40	88	132	66	59	76	636
Grand Total	92	12	6	2	0	0	184	260	180	157	517	1002	451	278	364	3505

Figure 9: Support Requests by location

A significant number of support requests (636 requests: 18% of the total) have come from displaced workers who live outside of the West Midlands. These requests have been redirected to the relevant region so that action can be taken locally, with the West Midlands partnership focusing its support on the 2,869 requests from displaced workers living within the region.

Whilst care providers in the region continue to carry vacancies in excess of the number of displaced international care workers, the proportion of the market that has an interest in employing international care workers is limited, with 284 sponsors expressing an interest in having displaced visa holders signposted or matched to them as at the end of July 2025. This gives a ratio of 10 displaced workers for every sponsor expressing an interest in recruiting them. Moreover, the rise in the number of people seeking support for reasons other than non-

compliance suggests an increase in the number of redundancies and cancelled sponsorships, significantly increasing competition at a time when care jobs for displaced workers are already at a premium and when the criteria for employing them have been tightened.

Support to find new sponsors has developed over the life of the programme, with regional coordination through the Lifted “Job Matching” service being added early in 2025 to strengthen the support being provided locally by some (not all) local authorities. Throughout 2024 there were 71 displaced workers helped into new sponsorship opportunities, with a further 202 placements facilitated by Lifted in 2025, giving a total of 273 displaced workers supported into new sponsorship arrangements by the West Midlands programme.

Many more workers have had their ‘candidate profiles’ viewed by prospective employers. A sample of ten providers recruiting from the displaced worker pool in July 2025 showed that on average, each provider was “matched” with c.580 candidates whose profiles met the sponsor’s requirements, viewing an average of 97 profiles and requesting 12 candidate interviews per provider.

Outcome Data: Information on the number of new sponsors, sponsorships offered, and referrals for unethical practices. Safeguarding & Modern slavery data.

The charts below track movements in key data across the term of the programme 24/25:



The trend in sponsor revocations is broadly reflected in the distribution of workers affected, with most of the compliance impact being felt between April and September 2024.

There is a weak correlation between the sending of emails by UKVI and support requests being received – although the emails data excludes notifications sent to other regions, which have undoubtedly triggered requests for support from displaced workers living in the region but working for out of region sponsors.

The trend data suggests that the spring 2025 immigration policy changes, changes in National Minimum Wage, and employees National Insurance Contributions, correlation with an increase in requests for support, and ethical and other concerns raised. The region feels strongly that support should be available to international care workers affected by unethical and exploitative practices and the effects of financial pressures on providers, as such practices may quickly lead to UKVI compliance action. This does, however, increase the size of the displaced worker pool and increases competition for placements.

In recognition of an increasing number of ethical concerns, a “commitment to ethical practice” was introduced for all care providers seeking to use the Lifted platform and have strengthened our regional intelligence sharing processes to include recruitment and employment practices. There have been a small number of referrals to UKVI where significant concerns were identified, and this has led to compliance action against at least two sponsors.

Placement activity is on an upward trend but remains low relative to demand, with about 8% of total requests received (or 10% if exclude out-of-region residents) resulting in placements to date.

There were challenges with some of the quantitative data collection for the programme, including challenges in aligning the care workers living address with where their employers are registered, making it difficult to pinpoint the exact impact on local authorities. Frequent changes in the national data specification created challenges in settling on a consistent view of the data and the subsequent technical development work required to build systems that can produce the desired data.

The varied nature and timescales of the local initiatives created some difficulties in measuring the local authority offers and their impact. To overcome this, regular meetings were held with IR local leads to gain insight into the development of the local initiatives and the impact. The local initiatives were reviewed mainly through qualitative data.

5.2 People Behind the Numbers

Creating a model to identify and support over 4000 international care workers must be done at scale to provide access to a range of support, from self-support through to one-to-one support for care workers. Understanding people’s needs was important and the regional model created several triage and assessment points to identify people’s needs and signpost accordingly, e.g. at the point of registration with the regional mailbox, registration on the self-service MyUKLife portal, registration with the job-matching service, Lifted, and in connection with community and local offers of support.

Through the events arranged in Dudley, Coventry and Warwickshire, it was possible to meet and gain consent to interview some international care workers who had been displaced to better understand their stories and illustrate the challenges that they experience.

In 2022, the health and care visa opened a door. Thousands stepped through it. They left their families, invested their savings, and arrived ready to work. For many, international recruitment began with hope. A promise of a steady job, a chance to build a new life, and the opportunity to contribute to a sector that desperately needed people.

But hope met reality. When sponsorship licences were revoked, people found themselves suddenly without work, their visa status in question, their futures uncertain. Many had borrowed heavily or sold land and possessions to secure the role.

Here is a selection of those stories, with the names changed for confidentiality reasons. They give the human picture behind the numbers.

Yadid from Pakistan

'I arrived in the UK with my spouse and children as a care worker, hoping for a better life. Initially, both my spouse and I worked, but soon after work opportunities disappeared for us. My spouse managed to get a UK driving license and some care work experience but now needs a new sponsorship to continue working. I do delivery work to support our four children, but it is not enough to cover all our expenses. We feel isolated and face financial hardship, and our main hope is to secure a new sponsorship for my spouse so our family can remain stable in the UK'.

Ngozi from Nigeria

'I came to the UK from Nigeria in early 2024 with my husband and two children to work as a care assistant. I have experience as an estate officer and care assistant in Nigeria and have worked in care homes and with people with learning disabilities in the UK. However, my employer's license was revoked, and now work 20 hours per week, which is not enough to support my family. I have applied for new sponsorships and attended support events but have not yet found a solution. I am ambitious and hope to study mental health nursing in the future, but for now, I am struggling with visa restrictions, limited work hours, and uncertainty about my family's future in the UK'.

Aynoor from Pakistan

'I came to the UK from Pakistan with my husband and child, hoping for a better future for my family. I have a Master of Philosophy in biotechnology and experience working in science labs and teaching, but I arrived on a care visa because that was the opportunity available to us.

When we arrived, we realised that the job and sponsorship we were promised did not exist. The company that sponsored my visa had its license revoked, and I was left unable to work in my field or even secure a job in care without finding a new sponsor. My qualifications and experience in science mean nothing here because my visa only allows me to work in care, and even then, I can't get a job without a sponsor.

Financially, things have been very difficult. We spent a lot of money to come here, and now we rely solely on my husband's income, which is not enough to support us. The uncertainty and stress of not knowing what will happen next have been overwhelming.

I attended a support event to get help and information. There, I learned about health and mental health support, financial advice, and how to look for new job opportunities. I received guidance on finding a new sponsor, legal advice, and how to use job platforms, but I still don't know what the future holds for us.

The biggest challenges I face are finding a new sponsor, dealing with visa restrictions, and not being able to use my education and experience. Despite my background, I feel stuck and unsure about how to move forward in the UK'.

Janet arrived in 2023 as a support worker, trained and worked until her employer's license was revoked in Coventry. She has a provisional UK driving license but no car, her husband works as a dependent, and they have three children. Janet has been out of work since December 2024.

Gita from India, has three years' experience as a carer. Her employer's license was revoked in April, leaving her without work. She moved from Scotland to Coventry, has a husband (working as a dependent) and a four-year-old child, and faces language barriers.

Chandu from India came to UK on a student visa, worked as a carer during holidays, received sponsorship in January 2024 but was given no hours and lost the job when the license was revoked in June. Now living with their sister in Coventry, registered for job support, and has a background in electrical engineering.

Kemi from Nigeria, paid for sponsorship, arrived to find the employer absent and unable to work. Their partner works as a dependent, they have three children, and Kemi has five years' hospital care experience. Barriers include lack of funds for a UK driving license and significant distress.

Anna from Nigeria, came on a skilled worker visa in 2023, was not asked to pay for sponsorship, but found no work on arrival and the license was revoked. Has been working part-time in domiciliary care in Coventry.

5.3 Learning from Implementation – Regional level support

5.3.1 WMCA Regional Mailbox

Displaced international recruits receive tailored support from the West Midlands International Recruitment mailbox. The system operates a triage system, and signposts displaced international care workers to the range of offers across the West Midlands IR Hub including:

- A dedicated online area with guidance and FAQs
- A displaced workers guide outlining key questions to ask employers
- Access to pastoral care, buddying schemes, and hardship support
- Legal and HR services as part of the triage process

The My UK Life AI platform further enhances support by delivering information on working and living in the UK, including job search, CV/interview preparation, housing, health, immigration, and safeguarding.

Data and Impact (up to end July 25)

3,505 requests for support since the regional mailbox opened in November 2024, with 2,869 requests made by displaced care workers living within West Midlands.

5.3.2 WM Social Care International Recruitment Hub

The West Midlands International Recruitment Hub, coordinated by West Midlands Employers in collaboration with West Midlands ADASS, represents a pioneering regional response to the workforce challenges facing adult social care. The Hub provides a structured, ethical, and inclusive framework for recruiting and supporting international care workers across the West Midlands. It provides a multi-stakeholder approach underpinned by a partnership model that brings together local authorities, CQC-registered care providers, and independent sector organisations. This collaborative infrastructure ensures that recruitment is not only responsive to workforce shortages but also aligned with safeguarding, legal compliance, and community integration priorities.

The Hub offers tailored support across three key stakeholder groups:

- For Care Providers:
 - HR and legal guidance to navigate sponsorship and compliance.
 - Support with ethical recruitment practices, including safeguarding and modern slavery prevention.
- For International Care Workers:
 - Visa and immigration guidance, including updates on policy changes.
 - A platform to report unethical practices and seek resolution.
- For Local Authorities:
 - Resources to support care providers and workers, including webinars, shared best practice, and HR support.

The Hub is a regional safeguarding mechanism and a community integration platform. By embedding ethical standards and offering wraparound support, it helps mitigate risks such as modern slavery and exploitation, while promoting cultural inclusion and workforce stability.

The Hub's partnership with Lester Aldridge Solicitors has provided free legal and HR advice to care providers and local authorities. This service has been widely used and praised by care providers and local authorities, especially for helping organisations navigate complex immigration and employment regulations.

Monthly webinars have been offered covering a range of topics to further strengthen care sector knowledge and compliance. The care sector was engaged to ensure that the webinar topics were able to respond to the knowledge needs of the sector.

Impact and Activity (1st March 2024 to 10th September 2025)

The West Midlands International Recruitment Hub website is hosted by West Midlands Employers. The hub usage is summarised in Figure 10, with over 9,000 unique users since March 2024 and with web pages for hiring care workers, legal support and compliance being the three most popular content aimed at providers:

Figure 10. IR West Midlands Hub website report

IR West Midlands Website Report

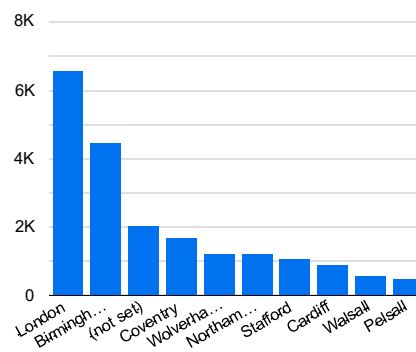
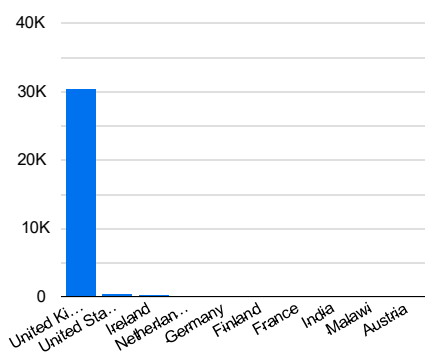
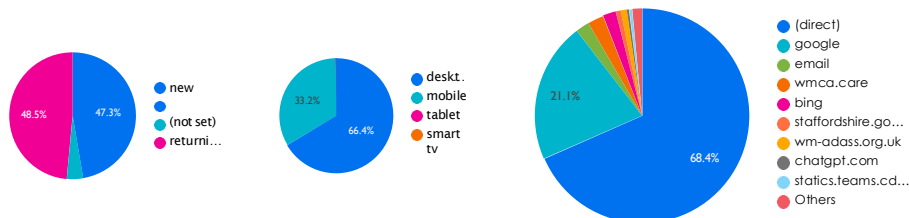
1 Mar 2024 - 10 Sept 2025

Total users
9,416
↑ N/A

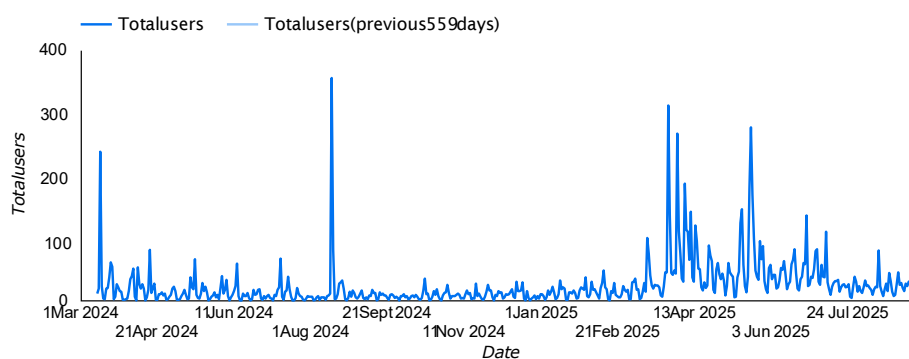
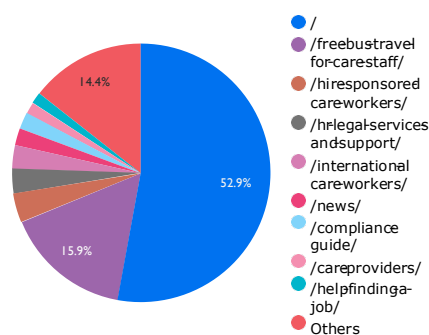
New users
9,385
No data

Bounce rate
46.42%
No data

Average session duration
00:04:04
↑ N/A



Landing page	
1.	/
2.	/free-bus-travel-for-care-staff
3.	/hire-sponsored-care-workers
4.	/hr-legal-services-and-support
5.	/international-care-workers
6.	/news
7.	/compliance-guide
8.	/care-providers
9.	/help-finding-a-job
10.	/resources



Activity spikes are typically seen around the dates of webinars, although a more sustained increase in activity has been apparent since changes in the immigration rules were announced between April and July.

The first two bar charts show page views, firstly by country (i.e. 30k page views from within the UK) and then by city area location. Each unique user typically clicks on 3.5 pages (on average) per session.

There are >6,000 page views linked to a London-based search, suggesting heavy usage by people based in London, and almost 1,000 from Cardiff. The users may include care providers, care workers, and policy leads interested in the WM IR Hub website.

Webinars were held by West Midlands Employers with legal and HR advice and support for care providers and local authorities between December 2024 to September 2025 and covered the following topics:

- Roll out of E-Visa
- Pay and Redundancy
- Introduction to the job-matching service
- Performance Management
- Compliance: Responding to workers requests
- FAQ's including TUPE
- Employment Rights Bill

There were 360 attendees across all the webinars, and the recordings of the webinars were made available to all care providers that had registered. This was to facilitate viewing of the recordings as suitable times for care provider staff. West Midlands Care Association organised the registration for care providers and 544/3000 (18%) care providers across West Midlands registered to receive the webinar.

The webinars were well received by those who attended and viewed the webinar, with the overall average scores out of 5 reported as:

- Usefulness: 4.76
- Communication: 4.76
- Knowledge Gained: 4.58

Local authorities have benefited from the Hub's strategic coordination which has facilitated provider engagement events, job fairs, and communication campaigns, while also sharing learning and evaluation insights at local, regional, and national levels. Councils are supported in maintaining regional consistency and sustainability through centralised delivery models and

access to real-time data analytics on displaced individuals, provider vacancies, and programme impact.

Care providers have been equipped with tools to ensure ethical recruitment and compliance with sponsorship licensing. These include:

- A compliance guide and FAQs
- A toolkit to assess agency suppliers against ethical standards
- Webinars and follow-up materials
- Access to legal and HR helpline services

The Hub also provided specific webinars to support the introduction, engagement and knowledge about the job-matching service (Lifted). Five webinars were held between March and September 2025 and covered Introduction to the Lifted platform and service; Sponsorship and Compliance; Immigration White Paper; and Access to the Displaced Care Worker pool. There were 356 attendees over all the webinars.

5.3.3 My UK Life: AI-driven self-serve digital platform

My UK Life was launched in January 2025 as a digital platform designed specifically to support international recruits working in adult social care across the West Midlands. The platform was developed by Bridgit Care as part of the West Midlands International Recruitment Programme with the aim to ease the transition for international care workers settling into life and work in the UK.

The key features of the platform include:

- **24/7 AI-Powered Coaching:** Utilises generative AI technology to provide round-the-clock support, drawing from local knowledge bases to answer questions and offer guidance.
- **Self-Help Portal:** Offers personalised advice on topics such as:
 - Visa requirements
 - Housing
 - Local communities
 - Employment rights
 - Cultural integration
- **Multilingual Access:** Available in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for diverse users.

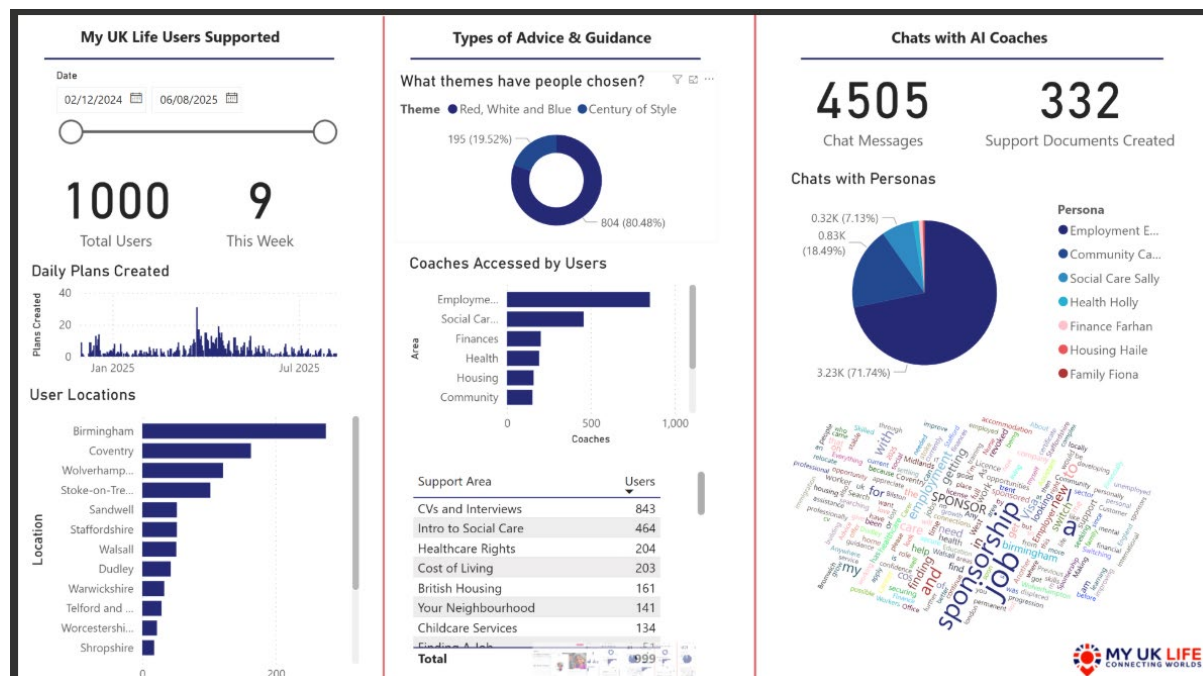
- **Community Integration:** Helps users connect with local events, groups, and resources to build social networks and reduce isolation.
- **Free to Use:** Open to all international recruits without cost, making it an accessible tool for both new arrivals and those already working in care.

The platform offers advice on adapting to UK workplace norms, helping users understand expectations around communication, punctuality, teamwork, and professional etiquette and resources to improve English language skills, which is essential for both professional success and social integration.

These features are designed to make the transition to life in the UK smoother and more enriching, supporting not just professional placement but personal wellbeing and social inclusion.

Activity and Impact

Date Range: 02/12/2024 – 06/08/2025



1,000 people supported on the My UK Life platform since it launched in December 2024 to 6th August 2025

Top 4 locations of users were Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton and Stoke-on-Trent.

4,505 messages exchanged with AI coaches across 6 functions:

Employment

Social care

Health

Housing

Finances

Community

Employment

Topics covered by the platform include:

- **Job Search & CVs:**
 - 843 users accessed CV and interview support.
 - 51 users accessed targeted “Finding a Job” tools.
 - 3,200+ chats were held with the **Employment Explorer** AI coach.
- **Social Care Sector Entry:**
 - 464 users engaged with “Intro to Social Care.”
 - Over 450 unique conversations were linked to roles in social care.
- **Understanding Rights and Ethical Practices:**
 - 204 users accessed guidance on Healthcare Rights.
 - Direct user messages included questions about revoked sponsorship and rights under UK immigration law.
- **Training & Preparation:**
 - Users frequently requested help adapting CVs to “UK standard” and inquired about qualifications needed to enter or progress in social care roles.

Living in the UK

- **Housing:**
 - 161 users accessed British housing advice.
 - 141 users sought information about neighbourhood activities
- **Health and Safeguarding:**
 - 204 accessed healthcare rights information.
 - Multiple user messages referenced stress and uncertainty.

- **Immigration:**

- Chat data confirm frequent mentions of “visa,” “CoS,” “sponsorship,” and “transfer,” reflecting real-time support needs.

- **Financial Advice:**

- 203 users engaged with the Cost of Living module.
- Users mentioned money loss due to sponsor revocation, unemployment, and housing pressure.

5.3.4 Lifted: Online digital employment matching service

Lifted offers a dual-purpose service: it facilitates ethical employment matching for care workers and streamlines recruitment and sponsorship processes for care providers. The platform is free to use for both parties, with optional paid support services available for providers requiring more comprehensive assistance.

Care workers engage with the platform via a mobile app, where they create profiles that are then matched—using AI technology—with suitable employers. This approach aims to ensure alignment not only in terms of qualifications and availability but also in ethical employment standards. For care providers, Lifted enables direct hiring through the platform and offers guidance on compliance with Home Office regulations.

Lifted was commissioned by West Midlands International Recruitment programme to provide a job matching service for displaced international care workers that had been signposted to the regional mailbox and were deemed eligible for support within the West Midlands region. The employment service regulations were a notable challenge for the region to provide a job-matching service within existing organisations, such as local authorities, hence the service was out-sourced for the programme.

Activity and Impact:

Since February 2025, Lifted has registered over 3266 care workers and 178 care providers in the West Midlands, with 202 care workers placed into new roles by end July 2025.

There have been some challenges identified with implementation of the job-matching process, such as care workers declining roles due to location mismatches, providers registering for advice rather than active recruitment, confusion around immigration rule changes, and platform engagement and communication with candidates and care providers. These were identified and responded quickly, due to the close collaboration between the delivery partners, regional programme team, local authorities and displaced international care workers, and care providers.

Some care providers across the region preferred to use existing recruitment models, and some local areas had established local arrangements with external partners to support job-matching.

Feedback from placed care workers highlight the platform's impact with testimonials describing Lifted as a lifeline during periods of uncertainty, particularly for those whose sponsorship was jeopardised.

The platform has been proactive in engaging with regional and local events to inform care providers, local authorities, and displaced care workers, about the service provided and support to access and use the platform effectively.

Lifted identified poor ethical employment practice in some care providers and changed the practice or reported the care providers. A "commitment to ethical standards" is required of all care providers registering for the service and an exploitation tracker has been built into the platform.

Lifted identified the need for more direct support for potential candidates and contacting candidates and care providers individually to overcome problems in matching recruits to employers.

Lifted acted upon feedback from care providers, local authorities and international care workers. They addressed a recruitment spike by reorganising processes, reducing the backlog to set up candidate profiles. They engaged with over 100 international care workers and used focus groups to improve the process at scale.

All candidate profiles are now reviewed within 48 hours. If not approved, candidates receive personalised feedback. The original feedback system was removed as was causing delays and confusion. Care workers are only contacted once Lifted has relevant roles, to manage expectations. Dedicated team members are in place to respond to all candidate queries within 24 hours.

A new dedicated support mailbox is live for all care providers and recruitment leads - support@lifted-talent.com

Other intelligence gathered included:

- CoS applications a major blocker to placements
- Care providers not following up on offers

Whilst the platform provides an excellent showcase for job candidates, it remains the case that large numbers of candidates are yet to find alternative sponsorship.

Reasons for non-placements include:

- Care workers turning jobs down due to poor location matching
- Non-drivers or car owners
- Care providers registering for advice and not for recruitment
- Confusion on the rules

Impact in the West Midlands (as of end July 2025)

- 178 care providers registered.
- 3266 care workers registered.
- 202 placements made (with 101 placed by end March and 101 placed by end July 2025)

Intelligence gathered about displaced international care workers (as of end July 25)

- 192 care workers indicated that they were being poorly treated with examples of reporting:
 - Feeling unsafe at work
 - Shouted at or swearing by colleagues
 - Forced to work more hours
 - Shouted at or swearing by care recipients
 - Charged for job
 - Not being paid

60% displaced workers are female 40% Male

Over 60% displaced workers cannot drive

Reports by care providers and care workers to Lifted:

- Lots of people not on care worker visas seeking help e.g. dependents, students who now can't be sponsored easily
- Providers worried about retaining staff who need renewals
- Fraud - fake CoS being "sold"
- Home Office rejecting CoS requests for inaccurate reasons - lack of understanding among case workers of the new rules.
- Increase in wage thresholds reducing attractiveness of sponsorship
- Sense that maybe it's just too much hassle

5.3.5 Safeguarding and Modern Slavery Support

While international recruitment has helped meet adult social care workforce needs, it has also exposed international care workers to risk of unethical employment practices, modern slavery and trafficking and safeguarding failures. West Midlands responded to the early intelligence from 23/24 programme and appointed a dedicated safeguarding lead for 24/25 programme to develop guidelines and collaborations to support care providers, local authorities and regional model partners.

Safeguarding Directory: A Regional Resource for Protection and Support

In May 2025, the West Midlands International Recruitment Hub introduced a Safeguarding and Wellbeing Directory, designed to provide rapid access to support services for care workers, employers, and local authorities. This directory is a cornerstone of the region's commitment to ethical recruitment and safeguarding, offering:

- Contact points for concerns about safety, wellbeing, or workplace practices.
- Signposting to services for individuals affected by abuse, exploitation, or crime.
- Resources for care providers to meet compliance and create safe working environments.
- Guidance for international care workers on their rights and how to report concerns.

The directory is not limited to international recruitment contexts—it is applicable across broader safeguarding needs and reflects the principle that safeguarding is a shared responsibility. It empowers stakeholders to act swiftly and appropriately when issues arise, reinforcing a culture of safety and dignity in care settings.

Sandwell's Strategic Leadership on Modern Slavery

Sandwell Council has emerged as a regional leader in tackling modern slavery, embedding its efforts within the Sandwell Community Safety Strategy 2023–2026. The council's approach is both systemic and multi-agency, involving:

- Data-driven insights into how modern slavery manifests across different communities, with attention to gender and ethnicity.
- Two strategic sub-groups:
 - *Prevention of Violence and Exploitation (PoVE)*: Focused on preventing modern slavery and child exploitation.
 - *Reducing Reoffending and Serious Organised Crime (RRSOC)*: Targeting organised crime and county lines.

- A Modern Slavery Delivery Plan with four key objectives:
 - *Protect: Strengthen safeguards for vulnerable individuals.*
 - *Prevent: Deter engagement in exploitative practices.*
 - *Prepare: Improve victim identification and support.*
 - *Pursue: Disrupt and prosecute perpetrators.*

Sandwell's work is aligned with national best practice, including the refreshed Statutory Guidance for Modern Slavery and the Local Government Association's modern slavery maturity matrix ([Sandwell Modern Slavery](#)), which helps councils assess and plan their anti-slavery efforts.

West Midlands International Recruitment programme commissioned Sandwell to develop and offer guidance and support to all local authorities on detecting and preventing exploitation of international care workers. The initiative includes training for social workers, nurses, and midwives to identify and respond to exploitation. Plans for monthly exploitation clinics aim to provide accessible support, although caution was advised to ensure urgent cases are not delayed. The initiative includes data sharing across delivery partners for the West Midlands International Recruitment offer to identify workers at risk and ensure appropriate referrals are made. A directory is in the process of being developed to signpost international care workers who contact delivery partners, based on type of exploitation.

To support local authority professionals in identifying potential exploitation, Sandwell has developed tools such as the Slavery-Free Sandwell Pledge, modern slavery checklists, and multi-agency training sessions, alongside a dedicated Independent Modern Slavery Advocate (IMSA) role funded to provide frontline support and intelligence sharing.

Sandwell's work on modern slavery with the programme has revealed critical insights into the exploitation of international care workers, highlighting that such exploitation is not confined to non-commissioned services but occurs across both commissioned and non-commissioned providers, often hidden in plain sight.

Sandwell advised that identifying exploitation requires a proactive and collaborative approach from commissioning teams, including the use of screening tools, targeted monitoring, and knowing what questions to ask and what to listen for during checks. The exploitation landscape has evolved, initially involving both skilled workers and students, but more recently focusing on those recruited under skilled care worker visas. This shift reflects changes in visa rules and suggests that more historic cases may emerge as awareness grows.

A particularly concerning trend is the recent policy change to enable students on study and graduate visas to be employed in adult social care roles. Students on study visas and graduate

visas will not be required to have a certificate of sponsorship and could face heightened risks due to minimal oversight, lack of training, and limited welfare support from universities. Cases have surfaced where students were underpaid, overworked, and housed in poor conditions, with some receiving food instead of wages. Unlike international care workers on skilled worker visas, students often lack the necessary qualifications and support structures, making them especially vulnerable.

Staffordshire International Recruitment Information Sharing (IRIS) project

The **IRIS (International Recruitment Information Sharing)** project in Staffordshire is a pioneering initiative aimed at supporting and monitoring care providers involved in international recruitment. It focuses on identifying and mitigating unethical practices such as exploitation, money laundering, and visa fraud.

The key objectives of the project are:

Risk Monitoring: The project tracks suspensions, revocations, and reinstatements of care provider contracts and sponsor licences.

Intelligence Coordination: Staffordshire acts as a central hub for intelligence sharing among agencies including the police, CQC, NHS, Immigration Enforcement, and ADASS.

Market Assurance: The team has developed contingency planning processes and improved visibility of market risks, moving from a reactive to a proactive stance.

The project has provided significant learning for the regional programme that is relevant to other regions and national learning. The work has led to successful suspension and revocation of providers involved in organised crime and exploitation of international care workers. Over 18 months the team has successfully improved the limited visibility of market risks to clear oversight of market risks and provider status. The enhanced oversight and guidance have strengthened the local market resilience in Staffordshire.

The challenges faced by the team include legal constraints in procurement regulations for terminating contracts where providers may be involved in organised crime until a criminal conviction is secured. Evidence gathering was also hindered by unclear responsibilities across agencies and slow legal processes, leaving local authorities with limited powers to act.

5.4 Learning from Implementation – Local Authority support

The local authority support focused on market shaping and risk management and identifying and connecting displaced international care workers with community integration and support, including for employment.

Market Shaping & Risk Management: Warwickshire, Coventry, Worcestershire, and Staffordshire have used data hubs and risk-based approaches to monitor international recruitment trends, provider viability, and license status.

Community Integration & Support: Coventry, Dudley, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, and Wolverhampton have connected displaced workers to faith and community groups, care providers, offering drop-in sessions, and developing peer support networks.

5.4.1 Warwickshire: Strengthening Support and Stability in the Care Sector

Warwickshire developed support for ethical redeployment of displaced care workers, workforce sustainability, and market stability, aligning with the regional delivery plan.

Warwickshire invested to support international care workers into employment with local care providers and have successfully placed 12 displaced international care workers with ethical care providers locally prior to the establishment of the regional job-matching process.

Warwickshire has been working with the programme since 2023 and following intelligence gathered about the risk of care providers licences being suspended and/or revoked, Warwickshire has taken an active quality assurance and market support approach with all carer providers. This has included a training and support initiative which has been successful.

Cultural awareness webinars have been held to assist with onboarding candidates reached 163 participants.

Warwickshire holds monthly peer-to-peer support meetings with 50-70 managers. Training has included targeted sessions with care provider managers and the delivery of webinars covering legal and compliance topics, modern slavery awareness, driving licence and insurance compliance, managerial liability under UK law. The police participated with the Warwickshire team to raise awareness of the legal risks and ensure safe working conditions for international care workers.

Intelligence gathered locally within Warwickshire indicated a need for a targeted event on health and wellbeing for international care workers. In response, Warwickshire and Coventry worked in partnership to hold a Health and Wellbeing Event in July 2025.

The event was well attended and had speakers and input from public health and other organisations covering topics such as sexual health; TB; diabetes; mental health and wellbeing.

Shropshire

Shropshire's IR programme continues to support displaced international care workers during 24/25 through a combination of local authority coordination, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

engagement, and regional partnerships. The Citizens Advice Bureau created a support toolkit that has been updated in 2025 with plans to roll-out to other CABs in the region.

Referrals of displaced international care workers are managed via Citizens Advice Bureau and direct contact. Support includes immigration advice, employment matching, and access to food banks.

Case study

Client came to the UK on a 3-year skilled worker visa in December 2022 and previously lived in Croydon however her employer lost their sponsorship license and client now working up to 20 hours a week. Client has had no contact from the HO to inform her that her visa is curtailed (as such client is not able to stay in UK). Client's partner is employed on a skilled worker visa. However, as he did this after March 2024 the client is not eligible to be on his visa and is looking for new carer work as she has not been sponsored and would like to remain in the UK.

The client was directed to the Lifted recruitment site to be matched to a new sponsoring employer. The client was also referred to a food bank for support.

By end July 2025, Shropshire Citizens Advice Bureau had dealt with 13 referrals. The summary of the support is given below:

Nationality:

- 5 clients identified as Black or Black British – African.
- 4 clients identified as Asian or Asian British (Bangladeshi or Other).
- 2 clients declined to state nationality.
- 2 clients had unspecified or withheld nationality.

Ward Distribution:

- Clients were spread across Shropshire wards including Oswestry, Severn Valley, Prees, Cheswardine, Whitchurch, Ellesmere, Llanymynech, and Telford.
- One client was based in London but supported by Shropshire CAB.

Contact Method

- 9 clients were supported via phone.
- 1 via email.
- 1 in person.
- 2 unspecified.

Case Types

- All cases involved immigration and asylum.
- Subcategories included:
 - Family, dependents & partners (5 cases).
 - Workers (7 cases), with 5 specifically identified as health and care workers.
 - Overstays and poor administration were noted in 2 cases.
 - 2 clients had “No recourse to public funds”.

Referrals have dropped significantly since May 2025, with only one direct referral noted in that month. This decline may reflect broader regional trends or reduced visibility of CAB services among displaced workers.

Coventry

Coventry has developed a robust and multi-layered support offer for international recruits, which includes:

- **First Point of Contact and Triage:** A dedicated resource to support displaced or at-risk international recruits, offering guidance, signposting, and coordination with care providers.
- **COS and Vacancy Mapping:** Intelligence gathering on Certificate of Sponsorship (COS) availability across Coventry and Warwickshire to support job matching.
- **Welcome Packs:** Distribution of tailored information packs for new recruits, including local services, legal support, and reporting channels for poor practice.
- **Training and Employability Support:** Delivery of targeted training such as CV writing and interview preparation, in collaboration with employers.
- **Pastoral and Legal Support:** Coordination of buddying schemes, access to legal advice (e.g. Tulia’s drop-in sessions), and integration with community and faith organisations.
- **Data and Reporting:** Compilation of datasets on international recruits to inform reporting to WM ADASS, UKVI, and local leadership.

Coventry worked in partnership with Tulia to support international care workers through 350 drop-in sessions and through weekly contact, taking self-referrals and referrals from community groups, churches and social care. To date they have successfully matched 55 displaced care workers into new employment, which is across the UK, as Tulia has developed relationships with care providers across the UK.

Tulia takes an active problem-solving approach with the care workers and supports them with peer support and networks. The care workers come mainly from Zimbabwe and Nigeria and tend

to use WhatsApp groups to communicate, with Tulia facilitating the development of 11 WhatsApp groups each with 1000 care worker members. The practical help has included car access for those without transport.

Tulia has addressed complex issues with people including undiagnosed health conditions, pregnancy, domestic violence, mental health, and child welfare, and isolation particularly in rural areas.

Solihull & Birmingham

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) has actively engaged in international recruitment to address high vacancy rates in adult social care, which stood at 13.9% in 2022/23 and reduced to 9.7% in 2023/24. The initiatives included:

- Creating a booklet for international recruits covering housing, banking, healthcare, and cultural orientation.
- A local buddying service through a large care provider to support new recruits and providers across Solihull.
- Joint training curriculum covering Mental Capacity Act, stoma care, and COVID medication rules. These were identified as training gaps by providers and have now been rolled out across Solihull and Birmingham as sustainable training offers.
- A care home event celebrating cultural diversity through food and traditional attire which was well received by care home residents and staff.

Wolverhampton: A Holistic Model for Supporting Displaced International Care Workers

The One Wolverhampton approach emerged from the city's pandemic-era experience supporting homeless populations and the "Homes for Ukrainians" programme. These efforts highlighted the need for a cross-departmental, integrated response to migrant support, which now underpins Wolverhampton's international recruitment strategy.

The initiative is governed by a Migration Board, chaired by the Director of Public Health, and reported to the Strategic Executive Board (SEB), ensuring alignment across departments such as adult social care, housing, public health, and commissioning.

A dedicated project manager coordinates the initiative, integrating it with Wolverhampton's broader migration strategy.

The initiative includes the development of a sanctuary-style website to provide onboarding guidance for international care workers, including GP registration, school enrolment, housing, and employment resources. AI-driven translation tools are embedded to ensure accessibility across languages.

Grants from the IR fund support partnerships with organisations such as the Refugee and Migrant Centre and Wolverhampton Business Centre Access. These partners offer direct support, including accommodation, employment advice, and safeguarding.

The programme targets early intervention for families at risk of destitution due to visa revocations or exploitation in private rented accommodation. It also includes health and wellbeing initiatives, with public health colleagues delivering workshops on sexual health, TB awareness, and HIV screening, with multilingual outreach materials.

Wolverhampton monitors care providers using the Capacity Tracker and self-assessment forms to assess reliance on sponsorship visas and mitigate risks across the care market, and contingency planning is in place for providers with high proportions of international staff.

Wolverhampton's offer is closely aligned with the West Midlands regional model, including the Displaced Worker Register managed by the West Midlands Care Association. Shared learning has taken place with neighbouring authorities like Coventry and Staffordshire to share best practices and coordinate responses.

The whole system approach adopted by Wolverhampton is a good example of how to create a sustainable offer to support displaced international care workers, proactively monitor market resilience, and uses data to drive decision making within the Council governance to ensure long-term viability.

Telford & Wrekin Partnership with Citizens Advice

Telford developed a locally grounded yet nationally relevant model that prioritises displaced workers, ethical employment, and sustainable care delivery. Led by Telford & Wrekin Council, the programme was delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice, Partners in Care, West Mercia Police, and local care providers. This multi-agency approach provided wraparound support for international recruits, from legal advice and compliance to community integration and safeguarding.

Telford established coordination of displaced workers with WMCA regional mailbox and signposted to Citizens Advice for follow-up and support.

Telford held recruitment days led by Citizens Advice with care providers and assisted 24 displaced care workers into employment.

Dudley International Recruitment Event

The Dudley International Recruitment Event was convened to provide urgent support and guidance to international care workers affected by the revocation of their visa sponsorships. Dudley experience of care provider licence suspensions and revocations for international recruitment, highlighted risks of workforce instability and ethical concerns. The event served as

a localised intervention aligned with broader national priorities around redeployment, safeguarding, and workforce sustainability.

The event brought together a wide array of support services to address the multifaceted needs of affected care workers:

- **Health Information:** Delivered by Dudley Council's Public Health and Well-being team, focusing on health protection and vaccination access.
- **Mental Health Support:** Provided by Maximus, offering free mental health services tailored to the needs of displaced workers.
- **Domestic Abuse and Modern Slavery Awareness:** Led by Safe and Sound Dudley's Community Safety Partnership, highlighting risks and available protections.
- **Financial Advice:** Offered by Wolverhampton City Credit Union, helping workers navigate financial strain and plan for stability.
- **Refugee and Migrant Support:** Delivered by the Refugee and Migrant Centre, covering health, housing, employment, training, financial independence, and citizenship preparation.
- **Community Services:** Provided by Work Well, a UK government-funded initiative offering broad community support.

Participants received targeted employment support, including:

- Guidance on finding new sponsors and applying for jobs.
- Introduction to the Lifted platform for job applications and sponsorship opportunities.
- Access to free legal advice, helping workers understand their visa status and explore options for changing or renewing their visas.

Personal Stories and Lived Experience

Several attendees shared their personal experiences, shedding light on:

- The emotional and financial toll of losing sponsorship.
- Challenges in securing new employment.
- Restrictions on working full-time due to visa limitations.

These stories underscored the urgency of coordinated support and the human impact of policy changes.

The Dudley International Recruitment Event was a proactive, compassionate, and multi-agency approach to supporting international care workers during a time of uncertainty. By combining health, legal, financial, and employment support, the event not only addressed immediate needs but also contributed to the broader goal of ethical and sustainable workforce development.

Walsall International Recruitment Response Team

Walsall established an International Recruitment response team to coordinate efforts across the Council to support displaced international care workers and to work with the local care market to support ethical recruitment practice.

The response team meets monthly to monitor the intelligence and ensure coordination of Council support. The support includes a web page and training offer for international care workers, covering safeguarding and mandatory skills; dedicated email address and standard advice sheet, connections with community and refugee organisations, quality assessment and assurance of local care providers. Monthly provider forums with the Council include international recruitment as a standard agenda item.

Partnership in Action Across the West Midlands



“The council stepped in. They helped me understand my rights. They listened.”

- Here in the West Midlands, councils, providers, and partners responded. **Regional collaboration meant displaced workers could be directed to advice, job-matching, and emergency support.**
- The work was often on the back foot due to national changes – but it showed **the strength of local systems stepping up where national policy couldn't reach.** Workers themselves recognised that sometimes the **biggest difference came from a simple act of human solidarity.**



5. 6 Evaluation of West Midlands International Recruitment Model against DHSC grant 24/25 objectives and outcomes

This section reviews the West Midlands International Recruitment model against the DHSC grant objectives for 24/25.

5.6.1 Facilitating In-Country Matching of Displaced Overseas Recruits

West Midlands developed a regional mailbox through West Midlands Care Association (WMCA), to receive notification of displaced international care workers, to triage displaced care worker enquiries and signpost to support offered through the range of support commissioned and provided by West Midlands programme.

WMCA advised local authorities of displaced international care workers in the local authority area, and this enabled local authorities to actively support displaced care workers through tailored local interventions.

The programme commissioned an external partner to provide an ethical job matching service. This online service was available to potential employers and to displaced international care workers.

There were challenges for international care workers using an online platform which required changes to the service to improve guidance for use of the platform and improvements in responses to queries and applications by care providers and international care workers. The online platform was successful in matching displaced workers into new employment and the learning from the challenges has been included in 25/26 specification for the service to continue.

Some local authorities developed local employment matching approaches for displaced care workers, which included commissioning of local organisations to support displaced international care workers, such as the local Citizens Advice Bureau or local voluntary organisations. These approaches were mainly face to face and were well attended by displaced international care workers with positive results.

The intelligence gathered from the online platform and local support offers, indicated that some displaced care workers lack work readiness and this limited any new placement success. The key barriers for employment include the ability to drive and have access to a car, being male, poor English language skills, and lack of care skills and experience.

5.6.2 Partnerships with Care Alliances and Communities

West Midlands International Recruitment programme has developed as a collaboration with care alliances since the start of the DHSC grant in 2023. This has enabled strong partnerships between West Midlands Care Association (WMCA), West Midlands Employers (WME), local councils, and the commissioned delivery partners for the online platforms for support and employment matching.

The creation of community partnerships was included in the criteria for grant allocation in local authority offers as part of the programme and this has facilitated strong community

collaboration to support international care workers. Examples are demonstrated in Coventry and Warwickshire partnership with Tulia, and the success in placing people into new employment; Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, developed a successful partnership with Citizens Advice Bureau which has encouraged displaced care workers to engage and has been successful in securing local new employment for displaced care workers.

The online platform service designs have been developed and revised following engagement with international care workers and from feedback about the service offers. The programme could benefit further from service user input to the overall model.

5.6.3 Strengthening Ethical Employment Practices

The ethical recruitment hub promotes ethical recruitment practice and actively supports care providers with HR and legal support; webinars and training; and through the development of tools for support.

The online employment matching service screens employers for ethical practice prior to matching displaced workers to new employment.

Local authorities have developed minimum standards, risk assessments and quality assurance processes to identify risk of unethical practice and offer support and advice to care providers to improve practice. One local authority also introduced changes to the care provider framework to reduce the risk of unethical practice and potential impacts on the local care market through sponsorship licence suspensions and revocations.

Regional and local market intelligence indicates that continued monitoring and enforcement is needed to prevent unethical practices, with a particular focus on non-commissioned providers, who provide direct services to clients in their homes.

5.6.4 Supporting Approaches for Safeguarding and to Prevent Modern Slavery

The programme for 24/25 has significantly increased the support at regional and local level to safeguard displaced international care workers and raise awareness of potential exploitation. The appointment of a dedicated safeguarding lead has been pivotal in this work, providing clarity on escalation and referral protocols, and with signposting information for all commissioned services as part of the model. The integration of the safeguarding approach with the National Referral Mechanism and local safeguarding boards is a particular strength of the model.

The learning from the 24/25 work is the need for consistent safeguarding training across all councils and care providers, and the need to expand intelligence-sharing mechanisms across the region to pre-empt risks, as some care providers will provide services beyond a local authority boundary.

5.6.5 Delivery Partnerships with Stakeholders

The governance of the West Midlands International Recruitment programme has facilitated a robust delivery partnership across the region and with and between local areas. The monthly partnership steering group, the delivery partners meetings, and the IR local authority leads meetings, have enabled a co-ordinated approach to implementation of the programme and facilitated active feedback to enable the programme to be agile. This has been particularly important during 24/25 with the rapid changes in policy for international recruitment of social care workers.

Communications during 24/25 have been transformed with dedicated communications support to ensure providers, local authorities, care associations and other stakeholders can engage confidently as part of the International Recruitment Programme.

Regular updates, slide packs and rapid alignment during complex national policy change have supported compliance and strengthened stakeholder trust. Through the redesigned West Midlands IR Hub, targeted bulletins, regular email updates and a full calendar of webinars and events, local authorities, providers and care workers have been able to access support available.

Sustainability and legacy has been built, with established communications tactics that will outlive the programme, as a usable online hub, containing resources that will also support the wider social care workforce beyond international care workers.

Some care providers across the region remain outside of care associations and therefore additional outreach strategies may be a benefit in the future.

5.6.6 West Midlands International Recruitment Response to Closure of the Care Visa Route

West Midlands had already anticipated this shift and the 24/25 programme focused not on new international recruitment, but on the redeployment of displaced international care workers, as well as scenario planning to manage risks and track market impacts of change.

The region was agile in collaborating with providers to shift from overseas recruitment to ethical redeployment of displaced care workers. Local authorities' local offers were supporting this transition, particularly where displaced workers present with safeguarding, housing, or other needs.

5.7 Key Learning from West Midlands International Recruitment Programme to inform the national Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy

The West Midlands International Recruitment programme offers rich, transferable learning that can inform the national adult social care workforce strategy across its 4 pillars: recruitment,

retention, training, and transformation. A description of how the programme's insights and innovation can be applied to the 4 pillars of the national strategy is given below:

5.7.1 Recruitment: Building ethical and scalable models

The regional ethical recruitment hub offering legal, HR, and compliance support for care providers could be replicated nationwide to support the large number of SME care providers across England.

The audit tools available on the regional hub help providers to assess ethical practices for recruitment and could be used to standardise ethical recruitment audits and training across regions.

The digital platforms developed in West Midlands, My UK Life -supporting integration and onboarding of international care workers; and Lifted – supporting job matching and visa support to both care providers and international care workers, are digital innovations that could provide a model for integrating digital tools into the national recruitment infrastructure for social care.

5.7.2 Retention: Supporting workforce stability

The buddying scheme and pastoral care initiatives developed in West Midlands to improve wellbeing and integration into new communities could be embedded into onboarding for all social care recruits.

Local authority led risk assessment processes to understand the workforce balance in care providers could be adopted across regions to pro-actively support care providers and workers.

The learning from Solihull care providers that a mix of domestic and international care workers enables greater workforce flexibility options, could be used to promote the availability of flexible contracts and career pathways to retain diverse talent.

5.7.3 Training: Enhancing skills and career progression

The English Language and cultural training tailored to care settings in Coventry and Warwickshire, could be developed as national training modules for care workers.

The use of self-serve AI platforms for continuous development could deliver scalable, multi-lingual training and guidance.

The development of 12-week induction programmes by care providers across the West Midlands illustrates how this could be integrated into a career progression framework.

5.7.4 Transformation: Data, governance, and innovation

The West Midlands data dashboard tracks sponsorship licences, revocations and workforce risks. Combined with the local authority intelligence and risk assessment, this model could be applied nationwide to inform workforce planning and risk mitigation.

The West Midlands governance model, providing a regional partnership with local authority leads for international recruitment, is a governance model that could be applied to other workforce innovations, using the principle of subsidiarity to enable efficiency and expertise whilst also enabling local intelligence and expertise to create sustainable solutions to challenges.

West Midlands has used digital platforms and AI solutions to understand workforce needs and tailor support. This approach could be leveraged to personalise support and forecast workforce trends.

5.7.5 Safeguarding and Modern Slavery

The dedicated programme safeguarding lead enabled the development of guidance for councils and care providers on safeguarding displaced recruits. This guidance could be used and developed to provide a national safeguarding framework for international care workers.

The collaborative work between the dedicated safeguarding lead and Sandwell MBC Modern Slavery Lead strengthens safeguards for international care workers against exploitation, which has wider application to the whole social care workforce.

5.7.6 Community Integration

The innovative work of Telford & Wrekin, Shropshire, Coventry, and Warwickshire in developing collaborations with local Citizens Advice Bureau, faith groups and community third-sector organisations demonstrates the expertise and connections in local authorities to create community resilience models for onboarding and supporting international care workers. This model could be similarly applied to support new domestic care workers to rural locations, identified as a key focus for future workforce requirements, as well as recruits to small domiciliary care providers.

5.7.7 Policy Influence

West Midlands International Recruitment programme has embedded learning and evaluation into the programme over the last 2 years. This has supported the engagement with national and regional International Recruitment leads to share learning on an active basis, enabling agile working to respond to changing needs and context.

West Midlands has piloted scalable models for ethical recruitment and displaced worker support, operationalised national strategy at regional and local authority level, and influenced national policy through data, innovation, and collaborative governance.

This approach in testing and implementing national strategy and policy could be applied to other social care policy initiatives and would support the leadership focus of the national adult social care workforce strategy, empowering social care to lead and influence on social care matters.

5.7.8 Outcomes

Area	Outcome	Summary Data
Matching & Employment	Displaced IRs triaged and matched with suitable care providers within 60 days.	273 displaced international care workers placed into new employment
Digital Platform Use	High engagement with digital platforms; measurable improvements in user knowledge and confidence.	Over 9,000 unique users accessed the IR Hub; Launch of <i>My UK Life</i> (AI-driven support platform) and <i>Lifted</i> (job-matching service), supporting over 1,000 and 3,266 users respectively
Provider Engagement	Increased number of providers with sponsorship licenses; active participation in job fairs and training.	284 care providers expressed interest in recruiting displaced workers; 178 registered with Lifted. 360 attendees across webinars; 544 care providers registered for ongoing support
Data & Evaluation	Real-time analytics on displaced individuals, provider vacancies, and programme impact.	WM data hub & WM data collection process referenced in this report.
Training Access	Uptake of training by displaced workers; care	360 attendees across webinars; 544 care

	providers; improved job readiness; improved employment practices.	providers registered for ongoing support. Local training offers fully subscribed e.g. Warwickshire English Language courses; Solihull & Birmingham targeted training for care providers.
Regional Consistency	Centralised response ensures equitable support across all local authorities.	Regional model designed to support all care providers and displaced care workers regardless of location in West Midlands.

6. Summary and Recommendations

Human-Centred Approach – Valuing People, Not Just Roles



“I don’t want others to go through what I went through. We need to learn.”

- **Care workers’ compassion and dedication** remain at the heart of the system – their stories show deep pride, empathy, and resilience.
- Listening to **lived experience** gives powerful insight into what makes good care and should shape national workforce policy.
- We must **not rely on care providers alone** to champion this – it needs consistent messaging, and investment.
- Recognise and celebrate care work as **skilled, vital, and values-driven**.
- Create a **positive national narrative around care** – building pride, public respect, and long-term sustainability.
- Embed **compassion, dignity, and belonging** as core principles in workforce design, training, and leadership.

The story of international recruitment is not only about care workers from abroad – it’s our story too and **many lessons must be applied across our domestic workforce.**



6.1 Summary

The 2024/25 West Midlands IR Programme has demonstrated the power of regional collaboration in addressing complex workforce challenges in adult social care. Amidst shifting immigration policies and rising ethical concerns, the programme has successfully redeployed displaced international care workers, supported care providers and international care workers, strengthened safeguarding mechanisms, and gained significant intelligence about workforce and the adult social care market across West Midlands and nationally, that can be leveraged for future workforce initiatives.

Sector-wide Learning and Growth

At the start of the programme there was limited knowledge in the sector about international recruitment, and over the last 3 years, West Midlands partners reflected that the technical and legal knowledge has significantly improved, with care providers gaining better understanding of what it means to be a compliant sponsor, with the knowledge that the West Midlands hub is available for advice and guidance when needed.

The International Recruitment programme has delivered on its original aim to fill critical recruitment gaps in the sector, with improved workforce diversity. The programme has developed initiatives that can be applied to the domestic workforce to support recruitment and retention.

The strong collaboration across stakeholders in the region has enriched the experience between care providers and commissioners, with both valuing the partnership approach to build resilience in the care sector and keep recruitment moving despite challenges. The development of new partnerships with community and faith groups significantly extended the programme's effectiveness to reach care workers and target support. These partnerships have a crucial role in the potential to expand the offer to the wider domestic social care workforce.

The use of digital tools to support the ambitions of the programme was identified as a key enabler to scaling up the work to support care providers and care workers, and with similar investment could be adapted to support social care recruitment and retention more widely, for onboarding, training, cultural support and community integration.

What Has Been Achieved

- A region-wide support infrastructure provided by partners, that facilitated creative solutions and design to a complex problem.
- Displaced workers supported and matched with ethical employers, with 273 placements achieved.

- Local authorities developed tailored support offers, including job fairs, peer networks, and partnerships with Citizens Advice and community groups, which has provided a lifeline to international care workers who were impacted by the unethical practices that occurred following the launch of the social care skilled worker visa route.
- Digital innovation applied to the complex challenge to reach displaced international care workers, a key pillar of the regional model, with AI-powered tools enhancing access to employment, housing, onboarding, health and wellbeing support.

Challenges Faced

- Visa route closures and policy changes created uncertainty and increased competition for placements, as well as challenges for the design approach to support international care workers. The double diamond design approach enabled the region to respond swiftly to the changes.
- Ethical concerns, exploitation, and safeguarding risks were prevalent, requiring rapid response and intelligence sharing. The collaborative governance of the programme was crucial to timely response.
- Data inconsistencies and platform engagement issues limited placement success and required ongoing refinement. This learning has been incorporated into new service specifications for the next phase.
- Placement barriers for displaced care workers, such as, limited driving ability, poor English skills, and lack of care experience hindered redeployment. The region responded by identifying on the IR Hub support for alternative transport for care workers, developing language skills training in Warwickshire, and working with care providers to support training and induction.

Lessons Learned

- Ethical recruitment must be embedded across all levels—regional, local, and provider.
- Community integration models are essential for workforce stability and wellbeing.
- Human-Centred Design is crucial, as the stories from displaced workers underscored the importance of tailored, compassionate support.
- Digital tools can scale support but must be complemented by human-centred approaches.

- The breadth of involvement in the programme, all 14 West Midlands local authorities, West Midlands Care Association, West Midlands Employers, Skills for Care, Citizens Advice, Tulia, Bridgit Care, Lifted – all helped to enable agile solutions, critical in responding to policy shifts.
- The regional model is scalable and replicable – it offers a blueprint for ethical recruitment, safeguarding and workforce integration.
- The use of data and narrative in the learning and evaluation reports has provided critical quantitative measures of the programme with qualitative insights that have informed the design and the ability to apply the learning and evaluation to wider social care workforce challenges.

6.2 Conclusion

The West Midlands IR Programme has delivered on its DHSC grant objectives but also generated valuable insights into the experience of international recruitment into the adult social care sector since the introduction of the skilled care worker and senior care worker visas in 2022. Three years on, the stories of people who came to support the recruitment problems for adult social care but instead found themselves impacted by the exploitation and unethical work practices of some employers and agencies, serve here to inform future recruitment strategies for adult social care. The risks are evident due to the complexity of adult social care market in the UK, and this complexity will need to be considered for the national adult social care workforce strategy, and future recruitment policies.

The cost of the unethical practice and exploitation to local authorities was evident in the number of revocations of international sponsorship licences and the subsequent impact on the local care market, i.e. care for people having to be placed with alternative care providers.

West Midlands partners stepped up to the challenge and collaboratively designed a region-wide model of support for local authorities, care providers, and international care workers impacted by the unethical practice and exploitation experienced in the sector.

Previous learning and evaluation reports in the West Midlands have highlighted the many benefits to adult social care that international care workers have brought to the UK and have been evidenced by the Skills for Care Reports. International care workers bring a breadth of skills to the care service, they demonstrate commitment to work, ambition in their work, and have enabled adult social care to be provided to many people in the community.

The lessons learned from international recruitment in the care sector are lessons that apply to wider social care workforce challenges. The social care market is not the same as the NHS, it is not provided by large public organisations with an infrastructure to support, it is a market of mostly Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) from which local authorities commission care

that reaches into the homes of over 1million people at a cost of £32billion per annum (2023/24: Kings Fund, 19 June 2025). In addition, £8.3billion is spent on privately purchased social care.

Adult social care is significant, it matters, and what has been demonstrated through the experience of the international recruitment programme, is that it is crucial to work with the partners across social care to address the workforce challenges, with emphasis on ethical practice, digital innovation, and community partnership. The learning in West Midlands offers a blueprint for future workforce development—both for the ongoing support of existing international care workers and for the domestic care workforce. As the social care sector transitions away from reliance on international recruitment, the lessons from this programme will be vital in shaping sustainable, inclusive, and resilient care systems.

6.3 Recommendations

Strengthen Regional Governance and Delivery Partnerships for Workforce Challenges

The West Midlands IR model demonstrates the value of coordinated and collaborative governance through monthly steering groups, delivery partner meetings, and local authority leads. This structure could be replicated to provide agile responses to other policy changes and workforce needs.

Publicise Local Authority led Support Initiatives

The local initiatives developed through the IR programme, such as care market intelligence and quality assurance approaches, onboarding initiatives, training, peer support networks, job fairs, and safeguarding interventions—have proven effective. These could be shared as best practice across councils and applied to the wider social care workforce.

Improve Employment Matching Systems

The digital employment matching schemes have shown significant promise but require refinements in user guidance, responsiveness, and hybrid support models to meet the needs of care workers to be supported in person as well as online. Future specifications could incorporate these learnings to improve placement success.

Embed Ethical Recruitment Standards

Continued support for care providers through HR/legal helplines, compliance toolkits, and training is essential to sustain ethical recruitment standards for all care workers. Minimum standards and risk assessments could be embedded into provider frameworks to mitigate unethical practice.

Develop a Unified Data Dashboard

The regional CRM and data tracking systems could be expanded to include real-time analytics on displaced workers, provider vacancies, and programme impact. This would support workforce planning and risk mitigation. The dashboard also has the potential to be applied to all care workers to support workforce planning and risk mitigation in the care sector.

Improve Data Consistency and Verification

Address challenges with duplicate applications, residency verification, and categorisation of displaced workers. Standardised data protocols across local authorities and platforms are needed for the continuation of the international recruitment programme in 25/26.

Strengthen Communication Channels

Monthly webinars, stakeholder sessions, and feedback loops have supported continuous improvement for the care sector. These could be embedded into operational delivery and expanded to include more service user input, and for application on other workforce issues in the sector.

Replicate Community Integration Models

Local partnerships with CABs, faith groups, and third-sector organisations (e.g., Telford & Wrekin, Coventry, Warwickshire) offer scalable models for onboarding both international and domestic recruits, especially in rural areas, where isolation is a challenge for care workers.

Support Workforce Retention Through Wellbeing Initiatives

Buddying schemes, pastoral care, and cultural integration activities have improved workforce stability. These could be embedded into onboarding and retention strategies nationally, and have application for attracting and supporting domestic care workers.

Standardise Training and Induction Pathways

Programmes like Warwickshire's English language training and Solihull's 12-week induction could be developed into national modules to support workforce readiness and career progression.

Expand Safeguarding and Exploitation Prevention

Sandwell's strategic leadership and tools (e.g., Slavery-Free Sandwell Pledge, exploitation clinics) could inform a national safeguarding framework for all care workers.

Respond to Visa Route Closure with Transition Planning

The closure of the Health and Care visa route requires urgent regional and national planning to support redeployment, new employment approaches in the domestic market, continuity of care for people receiving social care (including self-funders), and workforce and care market sustainability.

Accelerate Fair Pay Agreement Implementation

The proposed Fair Pay Agreement could be informed by regional data about workforce and the care market and implemented swiftly to address workforce retention and ethical employment.

Leverage Regional Learning for National Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy

The programme's insights into recruitment, retention, training, and transformation could inform national policy, particularly in areas of digital innovation, onboarding, training, safeguarding,

community integration, and collaboration with partners at all levels to design solutions to this complex challenge.

7. References

Cavendish, B. (2021). *Social Care: Independent Report*. Gov.UK.

CMO Annual Report 2023: *Health in an Ageing Society*. Gov.UK

Department of Health and Social Care . (2021). *People at the heart of care: Adult Social Care Reform White Paper* . Department of Health and Social Care .

Eleven lessons. A study of the design process" (PDF). Design Council.

https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/ElevenLessons_Design_Council%2520%25282%2529.pdf

Garside J.R., N. D. (2023). *International nurses and their initial integration into NHS England workforce*. University of Huddersfield.

HM Government (May 2025) Restoring Control over the Immigration System: White Paper

[Independent Chief Inspector Borders and Immigration Report 2023](#)

International recruitment to adult social care: A guide for councils, published by the LGA:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/international-recruitment-adult-social-care-guide-councils#market-shaping-commissioning-and-contract-management>

Kharicha, K., Manthorpe, J., Kessler, I., & Moriarty, J. (2023). *Understanding the impact of changes to the UK Health and Care Visa System on the adult social care workforce in England, Phase 1: The Visa Study*. NIHR Policy Research Unit in Health and Social Care Workforce, The Policy Institute, King's College London. <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-145>

[NHS England Long Term Workforce Plan 2023](#)

Palmer, B. L. (2021). *Recruitment of nurses from Overseas: Exploring the factors affecting levels of international recruitment* . The Nuffield Trust .

Skills for Care . (2023). *The State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England* . Skills For Care .

Skills For Care. (2024). *A Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England*.

Skills for Care . (2025). *The State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England* . Skills For Care .

[WM ADASS 23/24 International Recruitment Learning & Evaluation Report](#)

[WM ADASS International Recruitment 24/25 Interim Report Jan 25](#)

8. Acknowledgements

Thank you to all colleagues and organisations that have contributed towards this project, without your input this would not have been possible.

Care Providers

International Recruits

West Midlands Care Association

Partners In Care (Shropshire, Telford, & Wrekin)

SARCP (Staffordshire & Stoke)

Citizens Advice Bureau (Shropshire, Telford, & Wrekin)

Church and Faith Groups

Skills for Care (National, Regional, and Local)

Shropshire Council

West Midlands ADASS

West Midlands Employers

The 14 Councils of the West Midlands

ADASS Regions e.g., NWADASS & established Academies, and National partners e.g., LGA

DHSC

UKVI

Bridgit Care

Lifted

Lester Aldridge

Tulia