1 in 5 displaced overseas care workers moved to the UK for jobs that don't exist. New tech platform launches to match displaced care workers with ethical employers.

Thursday 2 May, 2024

New survey data shows 1 in 5 overseas care workers in the UK looking to change roles, have never done any work for their employer. Care sector responds by launching a platform to match exploited care workers with ethical employers.

Lifted Talent, a care provider and technology platform for ethical care recruitment has carried out a survey with overseas care workers in the UK looking for new roles, and launched a new tech platform SponsorSwitch in response.

Under the Health and Social Care Visa scheme, overseas care workers must be sponsored by an employer to work in the UK.

Key findings include:

- 1 in 5 of recipients had not done any work from their employer, despite employers being legally obligated to provide a genuine job with a salary of at least £23,200 (previously £20,960) and a minimum hourly wage of £11.90 an hour.
- A further 20% of recipients were given less than 10 hours of work a week
- 40% of recipients are living on less than £120 a week from their care role, despite Home Office rules stating they should be paid a minimum of £446.25 a week from the 4th April.
- 10% of recipients had been threatened by their employers that they would remove their sponsorship, leaving them with less than 60 days to leave the country
- 17% reported that they paid for their Certificate of Sponsorship. This is the document employers must gain from the Home Office and issue to care workers to allow them to apply for a health and social care visa. Employers and other bodies must not charge candidates for this document.

In response to these findings, Lifted Talent has launched a new platform called SponsorSwitch. SponsorSwitch matches exploited care workers with ethical care employers in the UK. It assists them to find housing and vehicles, and automates all Home Office compliance to ensure employers do not fall foul of the Home Office rules. The Homecare Association supports the use of this technology to connect workers with ethical employers who abide by the rules.

Rachael Crook, CEO of Lifted Talent said: “The UK has a huge shortage of care workers. The Health and Social Care Visa scheme has brought enormous benefits to our sector. However, it is being undermined by a small number of unscrupulous companies. This has led to people being brought to this country and promised a new life, only to find they are exploited or left without work. We knew we needed to act and SponsorSwitch was born.

We are delighted that this platform has been developed for the care sector by the care sector to support staff to have a second chance at the new life they were promised, and give the sector the great staff it so desperately needs.”

The Homecare Association is keen to promote the platform as their members want to help sponsored workers who lack work or face exploitation. Dr Jane Townson OBE, CEO of the Homecare Association, said: “These survey results show why it is so vital that we provide opportunities for sponsored care workers without adequate work, for whatever reason, to find new roles with the thousands of excellent home care providers in this country. We are delighted to support Lifted Talent to launch SponsorSwitch. It shows the power of sector collaboration and of the determination to care for those it employs”.

Leading care companies have already found new staff through the platform.

Lucy Campbell, CEO of Right at Home UK, one of the UK's leading home care companies with 84 franchised locations in the UK employing over 4500 workers said: “We are delighted to partner with Lifted Talent and the Home Care Association to launch SponsorSwitch. Exceptional CareGivers are vital to the support we offer people. We are committed to providing a nurturing and supportive environment in which CareGivers can build their careers. With the workforce agenda being such a crucial component of social care reform, we are delighted to have a partner that recognises this challenge and is well positioned to play a key role easing these critical pressures. Pleasingly we have welcomed 20

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CareGivers via the Sponsorship route into our network and look forward to welcoming many more."

Amrit Dhaliwal, CEO of Walfinch, one of the leading home care companies in the UK has also given his support to the platform. He said, “We support SponsorSwitch delivered by Lifted Talent, a new platform which enables care companies to sponsor new staff internationally, ethically and with full compliance. The shortage of good care staff in the UK has meant at Walfinch we are focused on retaining our wonderful team members and as a result, our retention rates are far higher than the industry average. Yet, there are still more roles to fill. We are delighted to have already found some exceptional staff through the platform to provide our award winning care.”

Notes to Editors

Lifted Talent is a technology platform supporting care providers in the UK with ethical care recruitment. Rachael is a former Senior Advisor in the Prime Minister’s Implementation Unit and an Obama Leader, one of 36 leaders in Europe recognised by the Obama Foundation. Lifted Talent makes it easy, fast to find, onboard and retain staff wherever they are in the world.

Rachael Crook Co-fonded Lifted Talent after her experience as a young carer for her mother who was diagnosed with dementia when Rachael was just 24. Rachael also runs Lifted Care, an award winning home care company.

We can provide interviews with the following care workers as case studies:

Linda

Linda came to the UK from Zimbabwe in September 2023 with her husband. She was promised full time work as a domiciliary care worker. She left her two children in Zimbabwe expecting to earn enough to pay for them to travel to join her shortly. She sold all her belongings to fund her travel to the UK. Once she got to the UK, she discovered she would be working for less than 10 hours a week, earning less than £120 a week. She could not afford to bring her children to the UK. Her employer was then investigated by the Home Office and their sponsorship licence revoked, leaving her with 60 days to find a new role or leave the country. She applied to SponsorSwitch and is now working full time for a care company in Gravesend who are kind and supportive. She is saving up to bring her children to join her.

May* (name changed for safety reasons)

May* was recruited to work as a care worker in the UK from South Africa. She was charged £3,300 for her Certificate of Sponsorship. She paid 50% of this upfront and was told she could pay the rest out of her salary once she settled in the UK. However, when she arrived her employer immediately asked for the balance, and retained almost 50% of her salary each month to cover it. She could not afford food or fuel and was forced into further debt. She was referred to SponsorSwitch and is now working full time with a friendly respectful care company in Worthing.

Patience

A care company in the UK recruited Patience from South Africa. When she arrived, she was asked to work 70 hours a week. When she complained or was unwell, she was told she had no choice but to accept the extra hours or they would withdraw her sponsorship and thus her right to be in the UK. She was exhausted and terrified. She started looking for other roles. When her employer discovered this they demanded a payment of £2,600 to cover their training and recruitment costs. She was referred to SponsorSwitch who matched her with a care company in Worthing. The team at the interview were shocked by the way she was treated and are committed to supporting her fully. She will start working there shortly.

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