



February 2026

Our manifesto asks for the next Scottish Government



A Scotland that welcomes every worker

We all want to feel safe, valued and respected at work, no matter who we are or where we come from.

And yet thousands of people who care for our sick and elderly, and who harvest the berries and vegetables that feed our families, are being exploited and abused every year. They come to Scotland to do jobs that are essential to our economy and society, only to be treated in ways that are far from welcoming.

The Seasonal Worker visa in agriculture and the Health and Care Worker Visa for social care workers are tied and temporary visas [\[1\]](#) and have both been associated by UK Government experts with high risks of abuse and exploitation.

Many workers are pressured by their employers to live in dirty, cramped accommodation, or to work long hours only to be denied their wages. Others face discrimination at work, particularly sexism and racism. Many struggle to see a doctor or get hospital treatment.

At the Worker Support Centre (WSC), we believe Scotland can do better. We partner with people working in social care and seasonal agriculture, often living on the margins of our communities. We provide advice on their rights at work. We listen and learn from workers' experiences and connect them with others in similar situations to collectively make change happen.

These manifesto asks seek to ensure we welcome every worker to Scotland, with dignity and respect.

Our vision for Scotland

Scotland is committed to becoming a Fair Work and Good Food nation, to advancing equality, tackling poverty and upholding human rights.

To achieve this we must ensure: all workers are respected at work, with no tolerance for labour abuse and exploitation; that everyone can live safe, healthy lives in housing that is warm and dry; and that all workers have a voice in policy that shapes their lives.

The next Scottish Government must act to build a country that welcomes every worker.

This document sets out six priority areas for WSC and those with whom we work:

1. Welcoming all workers to Scotland
2. Better regulation: A Scotland where all workers are protected from labour abuse and exploitation
3. Safe, dignified housing for seasonal agricultural workers
4. Making work pay for all workers in Scotland
5. Promoting health, safety and wellbeing in all workplaces
6. Amplifying worker voice and leadership

1. Welcoming all workers to Scotland

When a worker's right to stay in the country depends on a single employer or sponsor, that power imbalance can be used by unscrupulous employers to silence complaints and enable abuse. WSC along with [international experts](#), finds that people working on tied and temporary visas are at a higher risk of abuse and exploitation.

People on tied visas in social care report threats of sponsorship withdrawal, discrimination and destitution when sponsor licences are revoked (becoming "displaced workers"). Scotland can lead by ensuring displaced workers receive support. Removing barriers and supporting mobility will foster a fairer, more resilient labour market.

WSC calls on the next Scottish Government and all political parties to commit to

- Advocating for an **open work permit pilot** in Scotland for key high-risk roles, eg agriculture, fishing and hospitality, ensuring greater mobility for workers and removing the exploitative visa tie for low paid workers.
- Establishing guidance for local authorities in line with its Fair Work agenda for **strong vetting processes of care providers** for their treatment and fitness to employ workers on the Health and Care Worker visa.
- Leading a **joined-up plan for when worker displacement happens** jointly with the Coalition of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) and Scotland Excel to ensure worker-centred re-deployment of displaced workers.
- Providing a **tailored support service** in Scotland for displaced care workers who have been made unemployed when their visa sponsor loses their license to operate.
- Providing workers access to a **hardship fund** to prevent destitution.

2. Better regulation: A Scotland where all workers are protected from labour abuse and exploitation

Workers experiencing labour abuse and risk of exploitation are often isolated, socially and geographically, can experience low trust and confidence in frontline services and face significant barriers to raising workplace issues. Labour market enforcement offers vital protection.

The new Fair Work Agency (FWA), [will be established](#) in April 2026. It could offer a new coordinated and proactive approach to labour market enforcement. By working with Scottish authorities, including local councils, agricultural wage teams, [\[2\]](#) Police Scotland, and the Care Inspectorate, [\[3\]](#) enforcement could be more effective, targeted, and responsive to workers. It is essential that the FWA's promise is realised.

Whilst the enforcement of most workplace standards is reserved, there are crucial measures that Scotland could take to better regulate employers in social care and agriculture, particularly where there is a high risk of exploitation.

WSC calls on the next Scottish Government and all political parties to commit to

- Establishing a **registry of employers** who hire workers on tied and temporary visas. [\[4\]](#) Increasing transparency and accountability over employers and their fitness to employ and helping to facilitate workers' re-employment when sponsors lose their license.
- Establishing a **labour enforcement coordination group** in Scotland, with strong engagement of hard-to-reach workers, to oversee the activities of enforcement authorities, share intelligence and ensure resources are used effectively.
- Requiring an **annual report to parliament on the activities of the Agricultural Wages Enforcement Team**, enhancing scrutiny and trust.

3. Safe, dignified housing for seasonal agricultural workers

Everyone deserves safe and warm housing. Yet many people in seasonal farm work live in damp, over-crowded, dangerous, and draughty caravans. Whilst rents for units are high, reaching up to £324 per month for a bed in a shared unit, some workers also incur high additional charges and penalties.

WSC's [review of legislation](#) finds a significant gap concerning seasonal worker temporary accommodation, which falls outside all standards and enforcement regimes. This means, whilst some employers are providing warm and safe housing at fair prices, others are not and face no consequences.

Closing the gaps in housing standards and inspections will protect workers and ensure a level playing field. By taking action, Scotland can lead the way across the UK, and ensure that Scottish employers who are doing the right thing are recognised.

WSC calls on the next Scottish Government and all political parties to commit to

- Introducing **enforceable national accommodation standards** for seasonal agricultural workers.
- Requiring regular **inspection and enforcement** of such standards.
- Making **seasonal worker housing standards' compliance** a condition of all public funding and contracts.

4. Making work pay for all workers in Scotland

Fair pay is the cornerstone of dignity and security at work. Everyone deserves transparent, timely, and full payment for the work they do.

Strengthening enforcement and ensuring clear, accurate payslips empowers workers, improves trust in employers, and supports a productive and stable workforce. In 2025, 118 people in seasonal farm work shared evidence with WSC of non-payment of wages, incomprehensible payslips or forced holiday.

By enforcing employment protections, Scotland can ensure that all workers are rewarded fairly, and that Scottish workplaces are recognised for their fair work practices.

WSC calls on the next Scottish Government and all political parties to commit to

- Strengthening **enforcement of the Agricultural Wages Order** through increased pro-active inspections of high-risk workplaces and investment in inspection capacity.
- Introducing **standardised and transparent payslips** for use in the agricultural sector.
- Strengthening **enforcement of working conditions by the Care Inspectorate** in line with Scotland's Fair Work agenda.

5. Promoting health, safety and wellbeing in all workplaces

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) [deems](#) agriculture, forestry and fishing the riskiest industry sectors. Yet in 2024, HSE [ceased routine farm safety inspections](#). Seasonal farm workers have reported unsuitable or no training for high-risk tasks, lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), unsafe working conditions, broken equipment and unsafe infrastructure, and restricted access to healthcare to WSC. In social care and in seasonal agriculture people have reported risks from physical and mental strain, fatigue and stress.

Without strong health and safety standards in workplaces, people risk severe and life changing injuries, and without access to healthcare injuries and illnesses can deteriorate and become public health matters.

Accessible healthcare and proactive safety oversight are essential for all workers who sustain Scotland's health and food systems.

WSC calls on the next Scottish Government and all political parties to commit to

- Ensuring **clear NHS registration routes for all tied and temporary workers** and accessible healthcare information to be provided by frontline services and online.
- Including tied and temporary workers in **national and local mental health strategies**.
- Investing in **mobile healthcare interventions** to reach rural and isolated workers.
- Advocating for an **increase in Health and Safety Executive capacity** to inspect high-risk workplaces in Scotland.

6. Amplifying worker voice and leadership

People working on tied and temporary visas often lack representation and fear retaliation for raising concerns. Freedom of association, independent worker support organisations, expert legal advice, and protection from blacklisting or workplace retaliations are critical to building workplaces where everyone can contribute and improve conditions.

WSC calls on the next Scottish Government and all political parties to commit to

- Ensuring there is **proper representation of people on tied-visas** within the new Social Care Negotiating Body.[\[5\]](#)
- **Fund frontline organisations that are engaging workers at risk of exploitation** who are un-unionised or have partial union support, such as WSC.
- **Provide adequate funding** to the social care sector to facilitate Fair Pay Agreements, including meeting Unison's recommended [£15 per hour rate](#) and maintaining fair pay across the sector.
- Enforce **zero tolerance for blacklisting and repercussions** for workers through public contracts and public funding conditions.

Together Scotland can lead the way in welcoming every worker with respect, fair work and safety.

[1] . Tied and temporary visas tie a worker's immigration sponsorship to a named employer or labour provider for the duration of their stay in a country. Where used in high-risk sectors, including in horticulture (Seasonal Worker Visa), and social care (Health and Care Worker visa) these highly restrictive visas serve to increase workers' vulnerability to exploitation. Risk factors include the short-term nature of people's stay in the UK, the power imbalance between the worker and employer or visa sponsor due to the visa sponsorship tie, lack of union representation, worker isolation, and limited rights and benefits afforded to the migrant workers. Migrant care workers are estimated at 16% of the care workforce and there are an estimated 6570 seasonal workers in Scottish agriculture.

[2] Agricultural Wages Enforcement Teams in Scotland are tasked with ensuring compliance with the Agricultural Wages (Scotland) Order, including minimum pay, holiday and other conditions for agricultural workers. Officials investigate complaints from workers and carry out a programme of inspections.

[3] The Care Inspectorate is Scotland's independent statutory body charged with registering, inspecting and regulating social care. Whilst it does not inspect workplace conditions, it evaluates the impact of staff treatment and support on services.

[4] See examples of Employer Registries established at a provincial level in Canada, here for the Government of British Columbia:
<https://services.labour.gov.bc.ca/TFWRegistrationSearch>

[5] The new Social Care Negotiating Body for Scotland (enabled through the Employment Rights Act 2026) is intended to bring together employer and worker representatives to negotiate national minimum standards for pay and terms and conditions across the adult social care workforce.