

Carers suffer 6,500 violent attacks in five years



More than half of care workers suffer violence including being bitten, headbutted and choked at work, a GMB investigation has shown.

In a survey of more than 1,700 GMB care workers, 52 per cent said they had been physically assaulted at work.

A separate Freedom of information request by GMB to the Health and Safety Executive reveals that, in the past five years, care workers have suffered 6,469 injuries serious enough to prevent them from doing for job for at least seven days. The real figure will be much higher, the union warned.



More than 1,200 of those suffered a 'specified injury,' which can include broken bones, brain injury, amputations, and loss of consciousness.

In 2023/24, violence accounted for 39 per cent of all reported workplace injuries in the residential care sector.

Across the whole workforce in Britain, that figure is 9 per cent.

GMB's survey showed two thirds (66 per cent) have been verbally assaulted at work.

The findings will be presented at GMB's annual congress in Brighton today [Tuesday], where the union will call for an extension to the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act so that it also covers care workers, meaning those found guilty of attacks face tougher sentences. [3]

Selected quotes form survey

"Smacked across the head glasses and hearing aids knocked off, hair grabbed head pulled from side to side, fingers bent back and scratched."

"Just battered at least once a month."

"I have been punched, slapped across the face, spat at, scratched and bitten."

"I have been bit nipped head butted slapped."

"I was choked and punched."

"Had broken nose."

"Punched on head. Punched in face, kicked in crotch, scratched on arms and face, bitten on arms."

"Got battered with unopened can of Irn Bru."

"Had plates thrown at me, threatened with a full boiled kettle to be thrown at me, had my glasses punched off my face, hair pulled, top grabbed, bottom pinched and tapped, chest grabbed."

"A patient knocked 8 of my teeth out."

"I've been stabbed in the arm with a fork. Kicked, punched and grabbed by the throat, also been grabbed by the throat and punch repeatedly in the face."

"I got punched in the breast by a resident who use to be a professional boxer."



“Resident dragged me on the floor when assisting to complete personal care as was covered in excrement.”

Will Dalton, GMB National Officer, said:

“Care workers face physical violence day in day out, including the kind of attacks that would be treated criminal offences in most other jobs.

“Carers do a tough, skilful physically demanding job – usually for pennies above the minimum wage.

“They do it because they are dedicated and want to do the best for the people they look after.

“But as the care staffing black hole shows, that dedication has its limits.

“When attacks do happen, care workers need to be taken seriously and backed to the hilt by their employers – that’s why GMB is calling for better risk assessments and tougher sentences for those found guilty of attacking care workers.

“Ultimately, carers need to be paid a minimum of £15 per hour if we don’t want the entire system to collapse.”

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