

# “We are Kind of Nurses on the Cheap”: A Study of the Devaluation of England’s Feminised Social Care Workforce

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## Key Learnings

- Double burden of work affects women, exacerbating mental health issues, economic inequality, and career stagnation.
- Women face gendered burden of shiftwork.

## Social Care Work at the Intersection of Gender and Race

- Double burden of paid work and unpaid labour at home.

*“A woman does everything”*



*“I was waiting for you to come and cook”*



*“Why didn’t you cook?”*

- Link between working irregular shifts and poor pay with zero-hours contracts.

*“Very insecure job, really. And when it’s your main job, you need security”*

*“If a woman is going to a male’s house, what if something happens?”*

- Concerns about night shift safety and physical safety.

## Key Learnings

- Deskilling may be a form of racism in the case of minority ethnic and migrant workers.
- Connection between deskilling and devaluation of care workers performing ‘dirty work’.

## Training at the Intersection of Gender and Race

- Zero-hour contracts fail to allocate dedicated time for training, resulting in a lack of essential skills.

*“When I wasn’t prepared, I noticed how ill equipped the training I was given”*

- Expectation to complete online trainings in their own time.



*“I’ve come from a role that is managerial and now it’s cleaning people’s poo!”*

- Migrant women were more qualified than their British counterparts.

- Lack of career structure forces women into lower-skilled jobs.



## Key Learnings

- Racism and workplace discrimination due to ‘visible markers’, such as accent and skin colour.
- ‘Emotional inequalities’ are not ‘race neutral’.

## ‘Visible Markers’ at the Intersection of Gender and Race

- Overt racism and refusal of service from clients.
- Subtle forms of discrimination from employers and colleagues.

*“There are clients who have called them monkeys!”*

*“Because you are black or immigrant, some of them are not fluent with the language so they try to bully you”*



*“You just have to hang in there, we tolerate what is happening”*

- ‘Racialised feeling rules’, suppressing or altering emotions to fit expectations of predominantly white workplaces.



## Theoretical Approach

- To explore structural inequalities faced by women in the social care workforce that has led to the devaluation of their work in the sector.



## Research Participants

- 30 semi-structured interviews, including policy decision makers (n=12) and social care workers (n=18) who were migrant workers (n=13) and white British (n=5) women.

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