To

Councillor James Gibson-Watt

Leader of Powys County Council

Powys County Hall
Spa Road East
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG

11.04.2023

Dear Councillor

**OPEN LETTER – SHAW HEALTHCARE HOMES COMMISONED BY POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

UNISON is the largest public service union and union covering care workers in the UK. I am writing to you, as Leader, to formally to alert you to some poor treatment of care workers employed by one of your commissioned providers, Shaw Healthcare. I am aware that the Powys County Council UNISON Branch Secretary, John Byrne, has had an informal conversation with Deputy Leader, Councillor Dorrance on this matter, but as the Lead for Social Care for UNISON Cymru Wales I thought it important to write to you directly as well.

Shaw Healthcare runs a number of care homes in Powys and is in the process of enforcing detrimental changes to the contractual terms and conditions of care workers in their employment. They claim that they need to do this to secure a renewal of commissions from the Council. This comment below is typical of how UNISON members are responding to us as a result of these actions by this provider.

***‘I’m gutted I’ve had no choice but to sign the agreement... I can’t begin to tell you the negative emotions I am feeling right now almost to the point where I feel like I can’t go on. The feelings of being bullied, threatened and degraded are paramount at the moment.***

***Honestly, what is the point?’***

Shaw are removing the only paid break care workers have and extending their work shifts by half an hour as well as removing their ability to eat freely with the residents, now saying they can ‘have the leftovers’ if they pay for the meals. This is causing much dismay, but what is as bad is the sham of a consultation taking place (Shaw Healthcare do not recognise trades unions) and the bullying tactics of ‘Fire and Re Hire’ to obtain ‘agreement’ with the changes of care workers.

As a member of the Welsh Government Social Care Fair Work Forum I’m disappointed that such Dickensian approaches are still being used. These attacks on already exploitative pay and terms and conditions of care workers are the kind of practices which the Forum would like to see eliminated, and Social Care Wales may also take a dim view of these actions, which would not seem in line with their Social Care Workforce Strategy. I also doubt that the Deputy Minister for Social Care would be impressed with these attacks or the methods used, since the increase of funding to implement the Real Living Wage for Care Workers in Wales came with the explicit expectation that other terms and conditions were not to be cut.

As the UNISON Lead for Social Care in Wales I am aware that there are many Councils in England who have committed to only award commissions to providers who meet fair work criteria and I’m sure UNISON and other trades unions would welcome strategic discussions with the Council about supporting Powys’ care workers and ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect. If necessary, by bringing services back in house.

However, in the short term, I’m sure you will be as frustrated as we are that a provider commissioned by you is behaving in this manner, and stating that this is something they are required to do to win a contract with you. We would urge you, on behalf of our care worker members in Shaw Healthcare, to intervene in this matter in any way appropriate to protect Care Workers in Powys, most of whom live locally.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards



Mark Turner

Regional Organiser

Lead For Social Care

UNISON Cymru Wales

cc. Cllr Matthew Dorrance, Cllr Sian Cox