CALL FOR TENDER

Holding Up the System: Lived Experiences of Migrant Women Working in the Care Sector
October 2026

1. Purpose

The National Women's Council (NWC), in partnership with AkiDwA, is seeking an experienced researcher to support the design and delivery of a research project investigating how racism and sexism intersect to shape the working conditions and lived realities of migrant women working in Ireland's care sector.

This research aims to identify the sectoral, structural, and policy-level factors that contribute to unequal working conditions for migrant women employed in Ireland's care sector, including home support, nursing homes, and residential care settings. This project strives to advance the human rights protected under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). This research project is funded by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) through their 2026/2027 Grant Scheme.

2. Background

Ireland's health and social care system relies heavily on migrant women, whose labour sustains home support, residential care, and nursing home and hospital services. Yet national policy frameworks, including the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) and other national commitments to equality in employment, acknowledge persistent racial and gendered inequalities that shape these workers' experiences.

This research intends to underscore the need for a dedicated, rights holder centred examination of migrant women's lived realities within Ireland's care workforce. The 'Holding Up the System' research project will investigate how structural discrimination operates in practice and generate actionable, participatory recommendations to strengthen equality, accountability, and policy coherence across care settings. The findings will inform IHREC's own report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and NWC would also like to use them to develop a shadow report to CERD in consultation with our members and wider civil society.

This research report will build on recent analyses by NWC on the home support system. NWC's Ageing in Place: A Rights-Based Approach to Reform in Ireland's Home Support System (2026) report acknowledged that while experiences of migrant women employed in the formal care workforce emerged in the literature review, it could not explore many of the challenges these women faced as part of the qualitative investigation. This report recommended further research to explore this, with respect to the distinct challenges that migrant women face with respect to employment conditions, visibility, recognition, renumeration, and access to rights.

3. Methodology

The project will be guided by a Project Advisory Group (PAG) comprising representatives from NWC, AkiDwA, the research team, and relevant stakeholders, including rights-holders where appropriate. The PAG will support oversight of the research process, methodology, ethics, and dissemination of findings. We expect there will be approx. 3 PAG meetings during this research project, with NWC taking responsibility for chairing and convening these.

AkiDwA will play a central role in supporting participant engagement and recruitment through its networks and community expertise. NWC will lead on overall project management, communications, report launch, stakeholder engagement, and dissemination activities, supported by its experienced communications team with expertise in public engagement and policy advocacy.

The exact methodology to produce this research is flexible as we recognise the importance of the successful researcher having input into the design. However, NWC expects this to be a predominantly qualitative project, with the possibility of exploring a mixed methods approach through the introduction of an additional short survey. Key methodological elements will include:

- Desk-based research to develop a literature review to identify relevant national and international literature and other research to draw upon
- Interviews and possibly a short survey with migrant women working in Ireland's care sector
- Working with the PAG members to seek their feedback during various phases of the project

4. Research Questions

These research questions are indicative and will be refined with the successful researcher:

- How do race, gender and migration status intersect to shape migrant women's experiences of working in Ireland's care sector, including recruitment, working conditions, progression and job security?

- How well do Ireland's employment, migration and equality laws and policies protect migrant women working in the care sector, and what prevents them from raising concerns or accessing redress when their rights are not upheld?

5. Profile of Researcher

We welcome tenders from individuals or teams with experience in:

- **Participatory qualitative research**: demonstrated expertise in co-producing research with rights-holders, including semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis, and intersectional coding frameworks;
- **Migrant rights and gender equality**: strong understanding of racism, sexism, and migration-related precarity, particularly in employment or care-sector contexts;
- **Care-sector labour policy**: familiarity with Ireland's care workforce, labour regulations, equality legislation, and complaint/redress mechanisms;
- **Ethical research with minority ethnic groups:** experience applying trauma-informed, culturally appropriate and GDPR-compliant approaches;
- **Human-rights-based analysis**: ability to link findings to national and international human-rights frameworks, including CERD and NAPAR.
- **Policy-focused reporting**: proven capacity to produce clear, accessible outputs (reports, briefs, factsheets) that inform advocacy, accountability, and stakeholder engagement.

6. Scope of Work and Deliverables

The successful researcher will be responsible for the following, working closely with NWC, AkiDwA and the PAG throughout the project.

A. Research design and ethics

- Agreeing an appropriate methodological approach with NWC and AkiDwA, including whether a mixed-methods or purely qualitative, interview-based approach is more suitable
- Developing data collection tools, which may include a survey instrument and participatory fieldwork materials (interview guide, consent materials, participant information sheets), and seeking feedback on these from the PAG
- Ensuring a robust ethics approach, including trauma-informed practice, multilingual consent options, GDPR compliance, pseudonymisation and safeguarding pathways

B. Fieldwork

- Carrying out approximately 12 semi-structured interviews with migrant women working in the care sector, recruited through AkiDwA-linked networks

- Possible additional short survey instrument to be more widely circulated

C. Analysis and validation

- Carrying out an intersectional thematic analysis of the data
- Presenting draft findings and recommendations at an extended PAG meeting, which will include migrant women working in the care sector, to validate and refine them before the final report

D. Reporting

- A **rapid evidence brief**, by April 30th 2027, to inform NWC's and IHREC's reporting to CERD
- A **fully proofed research report** with an executive summary and factsheet, intersectional analysis and policy recommendations, by May 31st 2027. NWC will manage the design, print and launch of the report from a separate budget.

E. Dissemination

- Preparing and delivering a short presentation at a launch event hosted by NWC. Attendees will likely include relevant government officials, civil society, trade unions and care-sector employers.

7. Management

The project will be led by NWC's Deputy Head of Policy and supported by the wider policy team, in collaboration with AkiDwA. The PAG will guide the development and co-design process. The contracted researcher will be required to share regular updates with NWC and the PAG throughout and attend meetings where relevant and appropriate.

8. Budget

The fee for the successful researcher is **€12,500, inclusive of VAT**. This is a fixed fee and covers all the researcher's time and expenses, including travel and subsistence, for the research design, fieldwork, analysis, meetings, writing and finalisation of the research outputs set out above.

NWC has a separate budget for the following elements of the project, which NWC will manage directly. These costs **do not need to be included in tenders:**

- Hosting the extended PAG meeting/participatory data validation workshop
- A small payment to interview participants in recognition of their time
- Design and printing of the final report
- Hosting the launch event

9. Key Milestones and Timeframe

Milestone	Date
Deadline for tenders	5pm, Wednesday 18 November 2026
Interviews with shortlisted tenderers	26 November 2026
Contract awarded and approach to research agreed with NWC and researcher. Desk based work, including literature review can commence	Week commencing 7 December 2026
First Project Advisory Group meeting	Week commencing 18 January 2027
Fieldwork (interviews and possible survey)	February – March 2027
Extended PAG meeting/participatory validation workshop	Early-April 2027
Rapid evidence brief delivered	30 April 2027
Draft report shared with the PAG and relevant stakeholders for feedback	Mid-May 2027
Final research report (with executive summary and factsheet) delivered	31 May 2027
Design of report (NWC's responsibility)	June 2027
Launch event and project conclusion	By September 2027

10. Tender Requirements

To apply, a Tender Proposal should be emailed to Doireann Crosson (doireannc@nwci.ie) and marked "Tender for Holding Up the System" **by 5pm on Wednesday, November 18th 2026.** All information provided to NWC in response to this request will be treated with strict confidence.

Tender proposals should include the following:

Person/organisation details	• The name and address of the tenderer • The organisation associated with the tenderer (if relevant) • The tenderer's CV and the CVs of any personnel expected to support this project. CVs should include all relevant experience and have two examples of relevant research projects with a separate contactable referee for each

Qualification, Relevant Experience & Track Record	• An outline of skills, qualifications, and experience in this area • A demonstrated track record in qualitative research; experience on a similar research project and/or of working with similar stakeholders and/or marginalised groups will be an advantage • Experience of adhering to research ethics – including the responsibilities of the researcher with respect to data protection
Proposed Methodology & Understanding of the Brief	• A demonstrated understanding of the research aims and the researcher's responsibilities for this project • The proposed methodology for delivering the best results, in line with the conditions of this tender
Cost, Timeframe, & Value for Money	• Confirmation of ability to meet the timeframe of the project, including a provisional outline of a workplan • A demonstrated proficiency in delivering results, including with respect to communicating with project stakeholders and ensuring research meets expected deadlines and milestones • An outline of the costs: o Set out any issues which may impact on the cost o All costs must be inclusive of VAT and expenses o Demonstrate value for money o Breakdown of costs showing the number of days required to complete the task, the number of days for each person, if there is more than one person involved o The fee quoted should include travel and subsistence costs

11. Conditions of Tender

a) Tenders that are delivered late will not be considered.

b) NWC reserves the right not to award a contract if no proposal is suitable.

c) NWC requires that tenderers treat all information provided pursuant to this Invitation to Tender in strict confidence.

d) Information supplied by tenderers will be treated as contractually binding. However, NWC reserves the right to seek clarification on any such information.

e) All material gathered and all outputs arising out of the proposed contract will remain the property of NWC. Tenderers must agree to this condition.

f) All information and knowledge acquired by the successful tenderer during this project must be handled responsibly, ensuring compliance with GDPR standards and best practices.

g) Contractors must retain records of tax reference numbers for any subcontractors, whose payments exceed €5,000 including VAT.

h) Any conflicts of interest involving a contractor (or contractors in the event of a group or consortium bid) must be fully disclosed to NWC, particularly where there is a conflict of interest in relation to any recommendations or proposals put forward by the tenderer.

i) NWC will not be liable for any costs incurred in the preparation of the tender.

j) Payment for all services covered by this Invitation to Tender will be on foot of appropriate invoices. Invoicing arrangements will be agreed with the successful supplier(s), subject to the terms of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act (27 of 1997).

k) Payment of all services covered by this invitation to Tender will be based on the agreed contract price, completion of agreed stages of the work plan and upon the submission of the appropriate invoices.

l) NWC will have sign off and editing rights to the final version of the research ahead of publication. NWC and AkiDwA will ensure the final research and any subsequent use of the research materials gives due credit to the successful tenderer.

m) NWC will own the completed research and will retain copyright.

12. Evaluation of Tenders

Tenders will be evaluated initially with reference to the following qualification criteria:

- Qualification, Relevant Experience, and Track Record – 30%

- Understanding of the Brief and Proposed Methodology – 50%
- Cost of Successful Project Delivery, Timeframe, and Value for Money – 20%

Only those tenders deemed to have sufficiently met the above qualification criteria will be eligible for inclusion in the award process. Shortlisted tenderers will be invited to interview and may be asked to present their proposal.