



Neo Productions



SCOTLAND WHO CARES?



Highlighting Black Care Workers' Stories
During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic





Contents



Page

1. Acknowledgements
2. Introduction
3. Project Participants
4. Role of our Funder
5. The Care Sector in Scotland
6. Laying the Groundwork
7. Stories to Public Memory
- 8-10. Filming the Stories
- 11-15. Care Worker Stories
16. Conclusion
17. What Comes Next



**SCOTLAND
WHO
CARES?**

Acknowledgements

Neo Productions would like to give a special thanks to all those who graciously came forward to take part in this project. From the companies who worked with us and our excellent volunteers, to the brave care workers who stood up to share their experiences despite fear of public backlash.

This project could not have happened without this bravery and desire for justice and recognition, and for that, we want to express our utmost gratitude.

Finally, we would like to give our heartfelt thanks to National Lottery Heritage Fund, without whom this project would not have been possible.

“Understanding, valuing and sharing our heritage brings people together, inspires pride in place and supports local economies.” - Heritage Fund



Neo Vilakazi
Creator of Scotland Who Cares?



Introduction



Origins of the Project

Scotland Who Cares? is a project that started in late 2023 after the director sought to highlight the working conditions faced by some of his own friends and community members in the care sector during and after the Covid-19 Pandemic.

This project is about recognising and preserving the vital contributions of BME carers and nurses, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the years since.

This booklet is an accompaniment to the hour-long Scotland Who Cares? documentary which dives into detail about the lived experiences of BME care workers in Scotland today.

We hope this project is able to be used as a resource for learning about the lives of BME carers in Scotland, as well as serve as a testimonial for the sacrifices made by many underappreciated workers today.

Get Involved

If you're inspired by these stories and you would like to explore your own story or find more about your own heritage, please visit www.scotlandwhocares.com to make use of our free resources.

Project Participants

Neo Productions

A Black and Minority Ethnic-led arts organisation dedicated to creating high-impact opportunities in theatre, performance and heritage for historically marginalised communities across Scotland. We are committed to using the arts as a powerful tool to inspire cultural understanding, challenge prejudice, and build a more inclusive Scottish society.

SuperSize Media

Edinburgh-based marketing company specialising in media training, targeted advertising and building effective social media strategies.

Channel 7A Media

Media Channel specialising in videography and livestreaming. Has worked with organisations such as Celtic Connections, Tíree Music Festival, TMSA and the Scottish Storytelling Centre.

Nandi Hudson

Scottish BME actress and singer known for her appearances in Netflix series 'Army of Thieves' and the hugely successful nationwide musical 'Shona the Musical Choir'.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

The largest funder for the UK's heritage, distributing grants from £10,000 to £10million to support projects across the UK that connect people and communities to their heritage. In addition, they provide leadership and support across the heritage sector and advocate for heritage.

The Role of Our Funder

Every project of this scale faces challenges. From social media backlash to the difficulty of encouraging carers to speak publicly, there were many moments throughout the Scotland Who Cares? project where progress felt uncertain. What made the difference was the support, trust, and flexibility of our funder, The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

When recruitment and timing difficulties arose, The National Lottery Heritage Fund provided understanding by allowing us to adapt our methods, adjust timelines, and prioritise participant safety. Their flexibility ensured that carers' voices could still be captured without compromise.

This matters because many funders speak of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in principle, but do not always follow through in practice. The National Lottery Heritage Fund did. They invested in a project that celebrates marginalised voices, and they stood with us when we needed their support most.

We must thank them not only for their funding, but for their partnership and belief in the importance of these stories. Without their commitment, Scotland Who Cares? would not have been possible.

It is easy to speak of diversity. It is harder to fund it, trust it, and stand with it. The National Lottery Heritage Fund did all three.

The Care Sector in Scotland

At the time of creating this booklet, care work is still considered an unskilled profession despite it being one of the most challenging and necessary jobs in Scotland's ageing society. Hundreds of care workers have raised concerns about the sector's massive lack of funding and appropriate staffing, yet pressures continue to build on workers due to increased workload, poor compensation, and minimal support.

“There is a social care crisis in Scotland. It is getting to the point of no return whereby social care provision could become irreparably broken” - Sharon Graham, Unite the Union General Secretary

With the UK Government's recent announcement to close the care worker visa route, many have voiced concerns about this decision creating a hostile environment for existing BME and international care workers.

Scottish Care CEO, Donald McAskill, has stated this decision will make it difficult to retain the thousands of care workers that come from international communities. “It is deeply regrettable that using language that plays into negative stereotypes ... will lead to a devaluing of [international workers'] contribution.”



The Process - Laying the Groundwork



From the beginning, Scotland Who Cares? was designed as a community-led project. We knew that trust was the foundation: carers would only share their stories if they felt safe, respected, and supported. Therefore, our process was built around three guiding principles:

- **Collaboration** – working alongside BME carers and community organisations rather than speaking for them.
- **Care** – approaching every conversation with sensitivity, recognising the trauma and sacrifice behind these stories.
- **Visibility** – ensuring that stories moved beyond closed circles and reached Scotland’s wider public.

Building Safe Spaces

We partnered with local networks, cultural organisations, and faith groups to reach carers around Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. We created safe, welcoming environments where carers could speak freely. For some, this meant closed focus groups. For others, it meant one-to-one interviews with trusted facilitators.

From Stories to Public Memory

Gathering Voices

- **Filming Days:** We recorded long-form interviews with carers, led by Nandi Hudson as interviewer, capturing personal stories in their own words.
- **Workshops:** Group discussions allowed carers to reflect together, creating collective narratives of resilience and solidarity.
- **Creative Sessions:** With the help of Supersize Media, we included poetry, song, and storytelling exercises to give participants freedom beyond formal interviews.

Documenting the Journey

- All interviews were professionally filmed by Channel 7A and archived securely.
- Key themes were drawn from transcripts and testimonies.
- Stories were shaped into a documentary, booklet, and future exhibition format, ensuring multiple ways for the public to engage with the material.





Filming the Stories



Our aim in this phase of Scotland Who Cares? was to platform the lived experiences of BME carers in Scotland through filmed testimony, a medium chosen to preserve both the immediacy and emotional truth of their voices. The process of recruiting and supporting participants required a deeply thoughtful, community-rooted approach due to understandable fears around public exposure, backlash, and ongoing silencing of Black voices in Scotland.

Community Recruitment and Building Trust

Admittedly, the recruitment for this project was not easy. The fear many carers had of losing their jobs for speaking up in a project like this made it difficult to secure participants, especially for filming. After a number of attempts, we found that the most effective method of recruitment was word-of-mouth within trusted community circles. Conversations held one-to-one played a vital role in building trust. These conversations allowed carers to share concerns and slowly begin to understand that the project was a safe space for truth-telling and empowerment.

Social Media Backlash

When we created a recruitment advert for TikTok that explicitly celebrated and sought BME contributions, it received significant negative backlash, largely from white users who labelled it as "divisive." The ad was temporarily removed by TikTok.

This experience had a significant effect on participants. Several carers who had initially expressed interest chose to withdraw, fearing public hostility and racialised persecution. This moment underscored **exactly** why the project was necessary and how deeply the silencing of Black voices continues in Scotland today.



Filming the Stories



Grassroots Outreach

In response to the backlash, we expanded recruitment efforts to include grassroots, in-person outreach. We met potential participants on the street, at bus stops, in churches, at school gates, care companies, pubs, and live events. By showing up in real-world spaces where carers live and work, we increased visibility while offering reassurance that their stories mattered and would be treated with care.

A Willingness to Speak

Ultimately, a number of brave BME carers stepped forward to share their lived experiences. These testimonies represent stories rarely seen or heard in mainstream Scottish discourse, from labour and racism to resilience, care, and quiet strength.

The filming process was led by Sandy McGhie of Channel 7A, a filmmaker with a long history of working sensitively within community projects. We documented training sessions, recruitment events, group discussions, and individual one-to-one interviews. The interviews themselves were hosted and led by Nandi Hudson, who created a calm and affirming environment for each participant to speak freely and in their own rhythm.





Filming the Stories



5. Media Training

Because many of our participants had never been in front of a camera before, we recognised that storytelling support and media training were essential.

We partnered with Supersize Media run by Fin Wycherley, a local Scottish expert in media and social presentation, to run confidence-building workshops. These sessions provided tools for:

- Speaking clearly and calmly on camera
- Navigating nerves or fear of exposure
- Reclaiming voice in the face of historic silencing
- Presenting personal stories with strength, nuance, and pride

This training was both practical and deeply empowering, helping carers to find their voice in a public space, some for the very first time.

A Note on Care and Ethics

Throughout the process, we were aware that many of these stories involved trauma, marginalisation, and systems of neglect. We worked slowly, respectfully, and in full consultation with participants to ensure:

- Informed consent at every stage
- Control over how footage would be used
- Safe spaces during filming
- Emotional support when needed

Care Worker Stories

A common experience shared by almost all of the participants was feeling discriminated against by their employer due to their ethnicity.

“In the Philippines my father [got] ill and he was hospitalised, so I have to extend my leave for another week. My manager phoned me through long distance to the Philippines, but I didn’t answer because I was in the hospital. When I came back, I was reprimanded for that because they accused me of not telling the truth. That deputy transferred me to a heavy unit and she made my days even worse. She never sent me for a break. I was hungry. I was writing everything, the date, the time, and the stuff that I was working with. [By] that time I wasn’t sent for a moving and handling training, I didn’t know about the laws and the rules and the policies. I was in tears and I was so scared.”

Jaja, 68, Phillipines

“Sometimes I feel not supported. During allocation of jobs, like when you go to work sometimes they feel you are black, so they try to say you can do the work and they give you more work than the other ethnic groups. So instead of maybe you have about 15 jobs to do, you end up doing about 20 and there’s no fairness in the allocation of jobs which I’m not happy about. So I think it’s not fair, there’s no fairness.”

Anonymous, 30, Ghana

“Sometimes you see, you [are] getting some shift which is not at a friendly hour. When you kept getting it consistently... I expect that if you get a shift that is not at the friendly hour this week, the following week some other person should interchange with you. But sometimes you see some people being on a very good time, while some other persons will be consistently at unfriendly hours. I think some it looks like is a discriminating part of it.”

Namdi, 41, Nigeria

Care Worker Stories

A number of care workers also reported that they had been treated poorly by their clients.

“Not my employer but my clients. I have had that kind of experience before and I will tell you that for you to, y’know, be a support person or a carer, you must have that tough skin. I mean as a black person this kind of thing can happen, most people are not used to seeing black. So I’ve been discriminated against. But I did not take it personal. You just need to know your identity, who you are.”

Victoria, 52, Nigeria

“I will say that most times preferences are being attached to the, let me use this word, whites, than the blacks. You know, I’m black, so what I say most times doesn’t really count, you understand? I would say sometimes it counts but out of 100 I would say like 20%. So more of that is needed, for my voice to be heard. That would make sense.”

Anonymous, 30, Nigeria



Care Worker Stories

The long hours and stressful work environments left many of the carers feeling like they don't have much time for themselves.

“The work of support is quite a huge one, especially when you are being assigned to people who you have to carry, help bathe and all that. By the time you're done for the day, I mean you're exhausted. Sometimes I could just come back home and sleep and before you know it I'm preparing for the next day work. I mix both the care work and the media job, so sometimes I try to balance the two but it's not quite easy for me because I could count how many times I've slept on my bed. So sometimes I end up sleeping on the couch because I'm working and the the next thing I'm dozing off and I'm preparing to go to work the next day.”

Israel, 35, Nigeria

“Doing a one-to-one is not an easy one. You've got to take care of that person all through the day. If she's not sitting you are not sitting, if she's not sleeping you are not doing anything. So she basically work from morning til night, which has been the tough part of it. The difficult isolating part is because you've not got time for yourself. Imagine doing 12 hours shift, no sitting because your resident is not sitting, you barely sit 10-20 minutes through your 12 hour shift. So that's been difficult. Then I get home I just take a good shower, eat then relax. Have a good sleep.”

Anonymous, 39, Unknown

“You cannot really do so much with your time because their life is your life. When they're asleep, you need to be attentive. Whatever they are doing, you need to be attentive to be able to give details when you are asked a particular question, you know. So it's actually stressful. So for me the best way I can I find my own happiness doing what I love to do aside from care.”

Anonymous, 36, Unknown

Care Worker Stories

The carers shared what it would mean to them to be seen, heard and valued.

“When you are appreciated, when you feel seen, you will have the spirit to do more. When you are valued, you have the strength to keep grinding. But when you see that nobody notices you, nobody notices what you do, the work you put out there - even as little as it may sound, ‘thank you’ has a way to permeate. It goes a long way in lifting souls. You feel, oh I’m being appreciated, there is need for me to do more. Maybe the next time you will not just get a ‘thank you’ but you will get ‘thank you very much’. So, if you’re valued, you have the strength, the drive to do more.”

Blessing, 34, Nigeria

“I don’t think [that we are seen and valued]. I don’t think so. Because, honestly here, I believe that we the Africans are the ones doing this job. Most Scottish people, they are not really into the care system because I believe [they are] in the senior aspect of the job, that’s where they operate. But, we are interacting and being with the main service users. [Being seen and valued] will give me fulfilment that my work is being appreciated. So maybe you’re doing something right and you know you’re doing it right, and maybe someone compliments you about that, it gives you joy and fulfilment. So, it gives me joy if I’m being seen or being valued in what I do.”

Precious, 37, Nigeria

“It means a lot to me, to be seen, heard and valued. It gives me that enthusiasm to work more. It makes me feel I’m valued where I’m working. And one thing with value is if you’re not valued where you’re working or whatever it is you’re doing, if you don’t feel the value, man, for me its like it’s a waste of time. You’re not being valued that means you’re not being appreciated. That’s what it is. So, if I’m working in a space where I feel that value, that love, I will give my everything to it.”

Victoria, 37, Nigeria

Care Worker Stories

The carers shared what they felt would help make a difference and what people outside of the profession should know.

“I just want them to understand, we are not here to intimidate them or to do something or to take over their country or anything, we are one people. The way when they come to our country, we see them to be interesting people, we have fun when they’re around us and everything. I think when they do the same to us, we’ll be happy. In some cases we do know we are different, but we can be equal in some ways and do things equally. We cannot all be on the same platform but we can do something to meet up somewhere and be happy. Because I don’t think we are threats to them.”

Anonymous, 40, Ghana

“We are dealing with human beings, and sometimes we have to balance emotion with the work, because you are seeing the person being sometimes in a very critical condition. It gives you a lot of emotional concern. I find it sometimes taxing to balance the emotional feeling so that it doesn’t affect my work, because looking at somebody who is in pain or who is living in a very critical condition, it’s difficult sometimes for me to put my mind out of that condition and just do what I’m there to do. But I have to face it. I expect what should be done in that industry is to find a way to acknowledge or appreciate the work of the carers. One maybe a bit of pay increase and recognise their effort in the industry. It’s something that really come from passion, and not just the pay we are receiving.”

Namdi, 41, Nigeria





CONCLUSION



From Silence to Recognition

The journey of Scotland Who Cares? is the beginning of a broader movement to reshape how Scotland understands itself. By spotlighting the voices of BME carers, we have laid the foundations for a future where no community's contribution is overlooked.

The pandemic exposed fault lines of inequality, but it also revealed extraordinary resilience. Now, the challenge is to carry those lessons forward, building a Scotland that is both proud of its diversity and protective of it.

A Vision of Inclusion

Since the completion of this project, we would like to propose our Vision for the Future:

- A Scotland where BME carers are visible and valued at every level of health and social care.
- A Scotland where positive stories dominate as much as negative ones, inspiring confidence, pride, and belonging.
- A Scotland where racism is confronted, not ignored, and where silenced voices are given space to speak.
- A Scotland where care itself is recognised as a universal language, crossing culture, race, and faith.

This is not simply about carers. It is about rewriting the national narrative, one that embraces the full richness of Scottish life.

What Comes Next

The legacy of Scotland Who Cares? lies in what comes next. We aim to:

- Share the documentary and stories widely across communities, schools, and cultural venues.
- Build partnerships with policymakers, care organisations, and the media to embed these stories into the public record.
- Provide platforms for BME carers, past, present, and future, to speak for themselves.

Our voices will no longer be hidden in the shadows. Scotland's story is our story too, and it will be told.

Scotland Who Cares? is a promise that the courage, compassion, and sacrifice of BME carers will be remembered and celebrated. The future we imagine is one where their stories inspire both recognition and change.





SCOTLAND WHO CARES?

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During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic**



Thanks to National Lottery players



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