



One-fifth of zero-hours employees don't know when they can work

Annie Makoff 19 Jan 2017  0 comments

Pay closer attention to wellbeing impact of last-minute shift changes, employers urged

Contracted staff can have just two days' notice of shift changes, new research by Citizens Advice has revealed.

Nearly 20 per cent of UK employers admitted that workers on zero-hours contracts are given just [48 hours' notice of shifts starting, changing or being cancelled all together](#), found the charity's survey of more than 1,100 line managers, senior managers and HR managers in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

A 'significant minority' of companies were found to inadvertently make zero-hours contracts more challenging for workers, with 19 per cent failing to let staff know when they can work, 22 per cent not allowing staff to refuse shifts and 7 per cent admitting they gave staff less than two days' notice while

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not allowing them to turn down a shift.

Commenting on the research, Gillian Guy, chief executive of Citizens Advice, said: “The world of work has changed dramatically in recent years but employment practices have not kept pace. While flexible hours work well for some people, many find that the unpredictability and short notice of shifts makes managing life around their job a huge challenge.”

A spokesperson for the TUC added: “If you don’t know how much work you will have from one day to the next, paying bills and arranging things like childcare can be a nightmare. We need more decent jobs people can actually live on.”

The research highlights the psychological and financial implications of zero-hours contract on staff, particularly if employers do not have correct procedures in place to ensure workers have a healthy work-life balance.

Last week, a CIPD report revealed that [one in four people are performing poorly at work because of to money worries](#), and reminded employers that they have a ‘duty of care’ to staff, urging them to consider the impact of financial worries on employee health, happiness and productivity.

But Julia Kermode, CEO of the Freelancer & Contractor Services Association, insisted that zero-hours contracts have been ‘much maligned’ despite the flexibility they provide to both parties.

She told People Management: “Zero-hours contracts can be positive if conducted properly, preferably as an informed choice for both employer and employee, and in a non-exploitative way. I would urge the government to press on quickly with the number of reviews that are underway so that poor working practices can be stamped out and employees treated properly and remunerated fairly under zero-hours contracts.”

Previous CIPD research has also confirmed the benefits of zero-hours contracts. Speaking last year in response to the Sports Direct select committee hearing, Ben Willmott, head of public policy at the CIPD, said: “Our research last year found that zero-hours contract employees are, on average, as satisfied with their jobs, more satisfied with their work-life balance, and less likely to feel under excessive pressure every day, as employees as a whole.”

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Jonathan Chamberlain, partner at Gowling WLG, said: “The perception of employment contracts and the employment relationship is often at odds with the legal status. So-called 'permanent' employment is no such thing, whereas 'temporary' contracts can go on for years. But the labelling is clearly important to individuals. Having a 'zero hours' contract can tell you that you have little status and less security. That said, where both employer and employee appreciate the flexibility of the zero-hours approach, this is unlikely to be an issue – but it is something employers should keep an eye on.”

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