

Breaking news: Advice on using zero hours contracts

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Is Ed Miliband right about Zero Hours Contracts?

This week the spotlight has been on, in Ed Miliband's words, the "Victorian Practices" of Sports Direct in its use of Zero Hours contracts.

What are Zero Hours Contracts?

Contracts of employment which do not stipulate a "regular" hourly working pattern, ie, there is no guarantee of work from week to week and the hours required will vary according to the business need.

Are they *that* bad?

We believe that, when used correctly, Zero Hours contracts can be an effective way to managing a changing staffing need whilst enabling businesses to manage staffing costs.

We have put together some simple principles to ensure fair use of Zero Hours Contracts;

- Be up front with your employees from the start about the nature of their employment. People tend to work patterns that suit them and the irregularity of zero hours contracts can often be a positive for those who have sought that type of work.
- Always issue a written contract of employment which



About Green Light HR Solutions

Green Light HR Solutions is a North Leeds based HR

stipulates the terms on which the employee is engaged.

- Do not restrict any employees on zero hours contracts from working elsewhere. This would be unreasonable as you are stopping them from earning and in the near future such "exclusivity clauses" will become illegal.
- Give employees as much advance notice as is practical of the hours that you require them to work.
- Always keep a log of the hours that have been worked to ensure that you are correctly meeting your legal obligations to pay holiday pay, statutory sick pay, National Insurance and tax, some of which depend on the employee earning over a certain weekly amount.
- Keep the hours worked under review; if an employee is regularly working more or less the same hours consider transferring them to a contract with regular hours, you can always take steps to change it at a later date if the business need changes.
- Our advice to larger employers is to employ a number of employees on regular full or part time contracts, with a small number of employees retained on zero hours contract to supplement for peaks and troughs in business need.
- Zero hours contracts should not be used to test how good someone is in a job and/or as an easy way to get rid of a poor employee. In general, all employees have the same rights regardless of the type of contract on which they are employed.
- Generally, when employees are treated with respect and there is transparency over the grounds upon which they are employed from the outset, they will work hard and perform well. Problems often arise where there is mistrust or communication has broken down.

For further advice and guidance on the use of Zero or Irregular Hours Contracts please contact Julie on 07914 086984 or Antonia on 07710 456240.

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Consultancy run by Antonia Nicholls and Julie Shimmin. We have experience of working with small businesses and understand the people management challenges you face on a day-to-day basis.

Julie and Antonia are fully CIPD Qualified with over 30 years experience of working in HR and managing staff in both the public and private sector. All the work is performed by us. Our rates are competitive and we are keen to extend our client base. We are a small outfit who take pride in getting to know our clients and provide a high quality and bespoke service.



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