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Re-regulating Zero Hours Contracts

by Zoe Adams and Simon Deakin

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Re-regulating Zero Hours Contracts

According to the authors of this timely report, the current debate over zero hours contracts is generating more heat than light. ZHCs are highly profitable for employers, but lead to insecurity of income and low pay for workers. The authors point to rigidities in employment law and the operation of the tax-benefit system as being responsible for the rise in zero hours contracting.

Proposals to ban so-called exclusivity clauses are a red herring. Instead the authors propose reforms based on European examples including the reform of the UK's archaic rules on continuity of employment; changes to the benefit system, which currently encourage employers to offer short-hours, low-waged work and force individuals into accepting such work or lose benefits; and better use of new EU procurement laws which increase the scope for social issues to be taken into account when awarding public contracts.

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