

Plans to curb zero-hours contracts in social care unveiled

Under proposals being put out to consultation today, employers will need to offer workers in the domiciliary care sector on zero-hours contracts the choice of moving to a minimum hours contract after three months of continued employment, if there is ongoing demand for the work.

Measures to tackle 'call-clipping' have also been announced. The proposals would require providers of domiciliary care to differentiate clearly between travel time and care time when preparing employees' schedules, giving due regard to issues such as the distance between visits and rush hour traffic. This would help to ensure that care time – and therefore the quality of care – is not eroded.

Social Services Minister, Rebecca Evans, said:

“While some staff prefer zero-hours contracts, valuing the flexibility they can offer, for many the uncertainty and insecurity they pose can have a hugely detrimental impact on their lives. Crucially the plans we are putting out to consultation today will ensure employees have a choice. After three months of employment, they will be able to choose whether to move onto another zero-hours contract, or take up alternative contractual arrangements.

“The proposals I have unveiled today are not only intended to offer staff a fairer deal, but also to safeguard the quality of care and support people receive in their own homes. Research shows a link between the prevalence of zero-hours contracts and a reduced quality of care, due to issues around the continuity of care and communication between workers and those they support.

“Requiring providers to distinguish clearly between travel time and care time when arranging services, will also improve the experience of people needing care. Doing so will help tackle 'call-clipping', ensuring people's care and support time is not eroded by travel time between visits.

“I encourage anybody with a view on these important issues to contribute to our consultation.”

The consultation is available on the Welsh Government's website and will run for eight weeks, until 7 August 2017.