

23.06.13

**18 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Social Security regarding the use of zero-hours contracts with employees in the Island on work permits (OQ.124/2023)**

Given that, in the Employment Forum's April 2023 report on zero-hour contracts, evidence was provided that some employees who come to the Island to work on work permits have been given no choice but to sign zero-hours contracts on arrival, will the Minister take effective action to stop this unlawful practice by employers and, if so, to what timescale will she act?

**Deputy E. Millar (The Minister for Social Security):**

I thank the Deputy for his question. The question uses a phrase "unlawful practice by employers". As the Minister responsible for Employment Law, it is important that I confirm that it is not unlawful for an employer and an employee to agree a zero-hours contract. The reference in the Employment Forum's report is to a breach of work permit conditions. The responsibility for enforcement of rules relating to the work permit regime in Jersey rests with the Minister for Home Affairs and, under her supervision, the Jersey Customs and Immigration Service. The Employment Forum's report highlighted an issue of a particular abuse of the work permit regime in the context of zero-hours contracts. It made it clear in its report that the responsibility for enforcement and sanctions lies with Jersey Customs and Immigration Service. I believe that the Minister for Home Affairs and her officers are taking the necessary actions under their powers to ensure that this practice does not reoccur.

[11:45]

**3.18.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

What conversations have taken place between the 2 Ministers involved in order to eliminate this practice, which is and remains unlawful?

**Deputy E. Millar:**

I can only reiterate that the practice of putting employees who are here on work permits on zero-hours contracts is unlawful. It is not unlawful to enter into zero-hours contracts. The terms of work permits dictate that employees who are engaged under work permits are required to have a fixed period of work of at least 40 hours per week. The responsibility for enforcing that rests with the Minister for Home Affairs and J.C.I.S. (Jersey Customs and Immigration Service) and there is really no need for us to discuss the matter because it rests firmly with the Minister for Home Affairs.