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Zero-Hours Contracts Hit Near-Record Highs as TUC Demands Urgent Action on Workforce Security

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New Office for National Statistics (ONS) data has revealed that zero-hours contracts remain near record levels in the UK, climbing by 55,000 over the past year to reach 1.2 million. The figures have sparked renewed calls from the TUC for the government to outlaw exploitative practices and introduce a legal right to guaranteed hours.

The latest labour market statistics show the broader jobs market holding relatively steady in June:

- Employment rate: Up slightly from 75.0% to 75.1%.
- Unemployment rate: Down from 5.0% to 4.9%.
- Redundancies: Fell by 20,000 to 106,000.
- Youth unemployment: Remained stubbornly high at 14.6%.
- Vacancies: Dropped by 6,000 over the quarter to 707,000.
- Real pay growth: Slipped to 0.7% against CPI inflation, with private sector real pay creeping up by just 0.1%.

The Facilities Management Impact

For the facilities management and cleaning sectors, which frequently rely on flexible resourcing models, the ongoing debate around insecure work carries significant operational and ethical implications.

While businesses often lean on flexible staffing to manage fluctuating site demands, tenant turnovers, and events, the TUC argues that one-sided flexibility is failing workers. Research highlighted by the union shows that one in three insecure workers face a financial hit of at least £3,000 a year due to last-minute shift cancellations and associated costs.

Responding to the data, TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak said: “Exploitative zero-hours contracts are endemic in this country, with more than 1.2 million people stuck not knowing how much they’re going to earn each week. That’s why the government must deliver on its promise of a right to guaranteed hours for everyone. Employers are addicted to this one-sided flexibility.”

With youth unemployment remaining high at 14.6% and vacancies continuing a gradual decline, the TUC has urged the government to press ahead with plans to “make work pay” and tackle rogue employment practices. For FM service providers, balancing client flexibility with fair, secure employment models will remain a critical workforce strategy as legislative scrutiny tightens.