

# [Green Party: Low unemployment rate masks soaring number of zero hours contracts](#)



15 March 2017

The Green Party welcomes the falling unemployment rate but is concerned the figures mask the growing insecurity faced by workers.

According to figures published today, the unemployment rate has fallen to 4.7%, the lowest level in 12 years [1].

However, other statistics also published today reveal 905,000 people are now employed on zero hours contracts, an increase of about 101,000 in a year [2].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“While we welcome news that the unemployment rate has dropped to such a low level, the reality is more people than ever are employed on precarious zero hours contracts. With inflation rising and wage growth stalling, the high employment rate masks the insecurity faced by British families.

“Zero hours contracts are part of a gig economy that facilitates the exploitation of workers and companies are failing to fulfil their moral and legal duty to give their workers secure employment and basic rights.

“In this age of insecurity we should be thinking big about how we build an economy that works for everyone. That’s why the Government should follow the lead of countries like Finland which are investigating the merits of introducing a basic income, to stop people falling into poverty, while providing the choice, security and stability they need.”

## **Notes:**

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/unemployment-rate-falls-to-lowest-since-2005>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/people-in-employment-on-a-zero-hours-contract-mar-2017>

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# Construction worker seriously injured in wall collapse

A Manchester building contractor and a company owner have appeared in court after a worker was seriously injured on a refurbishment site.

The 53-year-old father of two from Salford was employed as a labourer at the site of a refurbishment project at Manchester One, Portland Street Manchester when the incident occurred on 29 August 2014.

The incident was investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and on 9 March 2017 Workspace Design and Build Ltd, the principal contractor for the project, and Paul Harrison former director of Access Flooring Specialist Ltd were prosecuted for serious safety failings.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard how two operatives working for Access Flooring Specialist Ltd had started the demolition of a freestanding concrete block wall on the site using a demolition hammer.

One of the men had started to cut into the wall just above the half way point, when the second man took over and continued from the top using step ladders for access. As he did so, the top half of the wall collapsed knocking him from the ladder and landing on top of him.

The injured person suffered fractures to his neck and back and spent three months in hospital following the incident. He has been unable to return to work since.

The HSE investigation found there was no suitable risk assessment in place for the work that was being carried out and the workers had not been provided with suitable work instructions for carrying out this task safely.

In addition to this no checks had been made regarding the injured workers training or experience, he was not provided with a site induction or adequate PPE for the task and the work on site was not being supervised.

Workspace Design and Build Ltd of Manchester One, Portland Street, Manchester pleaded guilty to breach of Regulation 22(1)(a) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and was fined £14,000 and ordered to pay costs of £2972.

Paul Harrison of Kirkfell Drive, Tyldsley, Manchester pleaded guilty to a breach of Section 37 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 relating to his companies' breach of Regulation 13 (2) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and was fined £1300 and ordered to pay costs of £2851

Speaking after the hearing HSE Inspector Laura Moran said: "The risks associated with the demolition of the internal walls at Manchester One were not properly considered and, as a result, there was no safe system of work in

place for the operatives to follow.

“Together with a lack of adequate supervision, these failings resulted in one man suffering serious and life changing injuries, which could have been prevented had the work been properly planned and managed.”

For more information about working safely at demolition sites visit:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/buildings.htm>

#### **Notes to Editors:**

1. The Health and Safety Executive is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. It aims to reduce work-related death, injury and ill health. It does so through research, information and advice, promoting training, new or revised regulations and codes of practice, and working with local authority partners by inspection, investigation and enforcement [hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [legislation.gov.uk/](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/)
3. Further HSE news releases are available at [press.hse.gov.uk](http://www.press.hse.gov.uk)

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

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## **[It is deeply concerning that millions remain in low paid, insecure work – Debbie Abrahams](#)**

**Debbie Abrahams MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary**, commenting on today’s Labour Market Statistics, said:

“We welcome the overall increase in employment, but are deeply concerned that millions remain in low paid, insecure work.

“The Government has also failed to close the employment gap faced by women, disabled people and ethnic minority groups, who are all less likely to be in work.

“Working families face the increasing costs of basic essentials, stagnating wages and the Government slashing

social security, leaving families £1,400 a year worse off up to 2020.

“Labour would reverse cuts to in-work support that could see working families lose £2,600 a year, ban the exploitative zero-hours contracts being used on hundreds of thousands of workers, and guarantee a real Living Wage.”

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## [The Government is recklessly talking up the idea of crashing out of the EU with no deal – Keir Starmer](#)

**Keir**

**Starmer MP, Labour’s Shadow Brexit Secretary**, responding to David Davis’ admission that the Government has not carried out an assessment of the economic impact of leaving the EU without a deal, said:

“The Government is recklessly talking up the idea of crashing out of the EU with no deal. They have repeated the mantra that ‘no deal is better than a bad deal’.

“But we now know they have made no assessment of the economic impact of the Prime Minister failing to secure a deal.

“What’s clear, from the CBI and others, is that there is no result that would be worse for the British economy than leaving with no deal; no deal would be the worst possible deal. The Government should rule out this dangerous and counter-productive threat before Article 50 is triggered.”

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## [BCC comments on labour market statistics for March 2017](#)

Head of Economics, Suren Thiru, comments on the labour market statistics published today.

15th March 2017

**Commenting on the labour market statistics for March 2017, published today by the Office for National Statistics, Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:**

“The UK’s jobs market is going from strength to strength, with the number of people in work continuing to rise and unemployment also falling.

“UK labour market conditions may cool over the next few years as the expected slowdown in growth and the rising burden of upfront business costs stifle firms’ hiring intentions. That said, we expect that the UK unemployment rate will reach a peak of 5.3% next year, still some way below the historical average.

“However, average pay growth continues to slow, and it appears increasingly likely that inflation will outstrip earnings growth in the coming months, which will put further pressure on consumer’s spending power.

“With Article 50 set to be triggered shortly, it is vital that more is done to provide greater clarity and stability for firms, including certainty on the residence rights of their existing EU workers, and clarity on the regime for hiring from EU countries during the negotiation period. Further action is also needed to ease the burden of upfront costs and taxes of doing business in the UK, which limit companies’ ability to invest and grow.”

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

**Media contacts:**

Allan Williams – Senior Press Manager

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

020 7654 5813 / 07825746812