

Unpaid Trial Shifts: Young People Working 40 Hours For Free In Desperate Bids to Find Jobs

The “scandal” of unpaid trial shifts has seen young people work as many as 40 hours for free, an MP bidding to outlaw the “soul-destroying” practice has revealed.

Job-seekers desperate for work are being asked by multiple employers to do unpaid shifts without any guarantee of employment at the end of it, Stewart McDonald, the SNP MP for Glasgow South has said. In some cases, unpaid shifts with various employers added up to 40 hours - the length of a full working week. McDonald has introduced a bill in Westminster, which, if it completes its journey through Parliament, would guarantee such shifts are paid “properly and fairly”.

Glasgow man George Seddon was recently made redundant from a supermarket and secured an interview for a customer service role at a start-up in the city. He said: “I received a call back the same day and they offered me a chance to participate in an ‘observational day’ between 8:45am till 6pm. I was not expected to participate in working but had to take a whole working day of my time and payment was not mentioned. I also got told to bring my own note pad and pen plus bring a packed lunch as none would be provided.”

He was told in an email from the supermarket to wear a smart suit, and that there would be “lots of information given and tasks set throughout the day”.

Another person, who asked to remain anonymous, said: “I have had to undertake unpaid trial shifts for two companies, one that offered me employment and one that did not. In one instance, I had to do an unpaid evening shift in a busy restaurant and was offered employment at the end of it, however, I was told that they were always planning on hiring me but made me do the unpaid shift anyway. The other company that made me do an unpaid trial shift was in a childcare environment where I was not offered any employment at the end of it. During the shift I had been told I was definitely getting the job and was asked to stay later than I had previously been told. However, I refused as I had given up hours at my other job to do the trial shift. I had no contact from the company afterwards and found out from a family friend that they had not hired anyone, instead they had taken advantage of young people as they were short staffed at the weekend so made people work unpaid on their busy days with no intention of ever hiring them.”

McDonald said Theresa May had to take action to stamp out unpaid trial shifts as young people were the group most likely to face exploitation. “This practice is not only soul destroying, it is unacceptable,” he said. “These are a few awful experiences and I’ve had people contact me sharing similar stories, with some people being asked to work up to 40 hours without pay. All work should be paid fairly and properly, which is why the practice of exploitative, unpaid trial shifts must come to an end.”

Turn over for questions

1 a Describe and explain this article's purpose. (2)

2 a Who is the audience for this article? (1)

You may tick more than one box.

Young people	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

b Give a reason for your answer(s) (2)

3 Summarise the issues George Seddon faced when applying for a job at a supermarket.

4 What, in your opinion, was unfair about the treatment of the anonymous commentator?

5 What does "soul destroying" mean?

6 What are your thoughts on the anonymous person's experience of trying to find work through unpaid trials?

7 **General Knowledge: Who is Theresa May?**

BONUS TASK: In your jotter

"All work should be paid fairly and properly."

Do you agree with this statement? Write a short passage in your jotter explaining your view. Try to use emotive and persuasive language, and make some good points, to back up what you are saying.