

Status update? Why employment status is a political issue

The question of whether a work relation is one of employment is often treated as the fundamental issue of labour law. To be characterised as an employee or worker entitles the individual to claim a range of fundamental rights against the employer: working time protections, national minimum wage, unfair dismissal, discrimination protections. It is the principal mechanism whereby those engaged in work are accredited with normative agency, demanding recognition and respect as bearers of rights.

For the last four decades, a steady stream of legal cases have come forwards, raising a multitude of technical legal points: personal work and substitution clauses, the meaning of 'mutuality of obligation', the nature of control in work relations...

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