

How will the general election affect employment?

As politicians pledge, promise and piffle in priggish tones on a daily basis, it becomes ever harder to keep track of who says what, and what the ramifications will be in the world of employment. Fortunately, the Association of Recruitment Consultancies (ARC) has been keeping tabs on the daily developments, which are summarised below.

Labour

Labour will raise minimum wage to more than £8 before 2020, and adopt mechanisms to promote the living wage by introducing new 'Make Work Pay' contracts to give tax rebates to businesses that sign up to become living wage employers.

They will also make it illegal to use agency workers to undercut wages of permanent employees by closing loopholes in the Agency Workers Regulations. On top of this they will ban recruitment agencies from hiring explicitly from abroad, and will adopt measures to ensure that agencies are complying with these basic standards, with a potential punishment of ceasing operations for companies who do not comply.

Regarding employment tribunals, the party hope to abolish the current employment tribunal fee system and create a system that is quicker for employers, employees, and the taxpayer.

They will also implement a right to a regular contract. If an employee works regular hours, they will receive a contract that is measured over the first 12 weeks of employment.

An initiative to tackle bogus self-employment in the construction is also planned, as is an expansion of the free childcare for working parents of three and four year olds; 25 hours will now be available, opposed to 15 currently.

Conservative

The Conservative party will help businesses create two million new jobs, so that 'full employment' is achieved. Steps will be taken to eradicate the abuse of workers, such as non-payment of the minimum wage, and will force companies with more than 250 employees to publish the difference between the average pay of their male and female employees.

The Tories will also ensure that industrial action in health, education, fire and transport would require the support of at least 40% of all those entitled to take part in strike ballots – as well as a majority of those who actually turn out to vote.

They will also increase minimum wage to £8 an hour and support the Living Wage.

UKIP

UKIP will make businesses who hire 50 people or more offer either a full or part-time secure contract work after a year, if it is requested. Workers on zero-hours contracts must also be given at least 12 hours advance notice of work. Once notice has been given, they must be paid for the work, regardless of whether or not they are actually needed.

Liberal Democrats

The smaller party of the coalition government will double the number of inspections on employers to ensure all statutory employment legislation is being respected and expand Shared Parental Leave with an additional 'use it or lose it' month to encourage fathers to take time off with young children

As well as this, carers will be entitled to paid leave, employment tribunal fees will be reviewed so they are no longer a barrier, a formal right to request a fixed contract will be rolled out for zero-hours workers, and mandatory arbitration for strikes likely to cause widespread public disruption will be introduced.

They will also force companies with more than 250 employees to publish their gender pay gap, and clamp down on abuses of employers.

Green Party

Natalie Bennett's party will increase the minimum wage and propose a target for everyone who is working in the UK of £10 per hour by 2020. In 2015, this would mean a minimum wage of £8.10 an hour. The right to a trade union and have your employer recognise it will also be revived, and zero-hours contracts and unpaid internships longer than four weeks will be no more.

A maximum pay ratio of 10:1 between the best and worst paid employee in an organisation will be introduced, as well as a reduction of employment tribunal fees.

Plaid Cymru

As well as ending zero-hours contracts, reviewing current levels of employment tribunal fees, and setting the minimum wage to be the living wage in the next Parliament, Plaid Cymru will provide tax relief for self-employed workers undertaking training and investigate the creation of a Welsh based training agency, specializing in training the self-employed.

SNP

The Scottish National Party will increase the Minimum Wage to £8.70 by 2020 and ensure that all those working in the public sector are paid the Living Wage. They will put an end to zero hours contracts and seek to reverse recent changes that have reduced key aspects of workers' rights, for example, the restoration of a 90 day consultation period for redundancies affecting 100 or more employees.

Tory plans to change the mechanics of a strike ballot will be opposed and countered with proposals to modernise the way strike ballots are undertaken, with safe and secure online voting to maximise participation.

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