



THE VIEW AND THE INTELLIGENCE

The rise and rise of green jobs p3



BIG TALKING POINT

What can ChatGPT do for you? p4



LEGAL UPDATE

How TUPE relates to employment firms p6



Q&A

James Reed on skills and charity p7

Opportunities

REC and Restart help 255 into jobs

The REC helped to place 255 people classed as long-term unemployed into either temporary or permanent employment in 2022, as part of its involvement in the government's Restart scheme. This is double the target set by the REC and the Restart service provider Maximus for 2022, although targets are less important than the ongoing success of the strategy.

The REC/Maximus scheme covers London, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire. Maximus uses funding from its community partnership network to provide courses, training and specific licences for jobseekers. The REC helps by connecting Maximus with its members who are looking for candidates – particularly relevant today because of the scarcity of applicants in many markets. Those who start jobs because of the scheme are allocated a work-support adviser to help them in their new roles.

Alice McDermott, REC Restart Liaison Manager (pictured above), said: "We are succeeding in bringing the labour market to the candidate. I would like to thank REC members for the open and constructive role they are playing."

The ages of the Restart jobseekers range from 18 to 60. Some had lost their jobs because of redundancies caused by



the pandemic in sectors such as hospitality. Others stopped working because they were disillusioned or suffered from anxiety working in sectors

such as social care, or wanted to work from home and could not do this in their existing roles. Particular barriers to employment included a lack of digital skills or communication problems if English was not their first language.

"Our approach benefits all sides: recruiters and their clients gain access to a diverse pool of talent they may not have typically been able to reach," said Gareth Parry, Programme Director, Employability Division, at Maximus.

"Maximus gains access to additional vacancies in growth sectors. And most importantly, Restart scheme participants are able to secure quality roles and develop careers in new sectors they may not have previously considered or had access to," he explained.

Case study

Thomas Eggleston is 27 and lives in Leeds. "I had been unemployed for a year when I was referred to Maximus to join the Restart Scheme. In my year of unemployment, my CSCS card ran out, so they provided funding for me to do my CSCS renewal course with a Total Training Provider. The two-week course was good and refreshed my skills and knowledge," he said.

"Once I passed, I was introduced to Planet Caval by Alice McDermott at the REC, and I have been working through them as a labourer since. It has been great for me to be back working and I'm hoping to be taken on permanently soon."

Tim Wells, Caval's Operation Director, said his firm has been using the REC/Maximus Restart Partnership for over six months and it has developed into a useful outlet. "It has been advantageous to meet the candidates in person following their registration to Maximus, and I am happy to say we have successfully placed several people. Some are now on their second or third contract, while others have remained at their first contract for over 12 weeks."

the view...



Doing the hard yards can unlock growth, says **Neil Carberry**, REC Chief Executive

The Super Bowl passed recently, and with it another NFL season ended. As a big Green Bay fan, I'm afraid my interest had fizzled out a few weeks before this.

The 'hard yards' is a concept born in American Football. The theory is that, the closer you get to the goal line, the more difficult it becomes to advance the ball. The defence can afford to give you less space, and you are tiring.

Economically, we are in the hard yards. After three years of flux, and with the economy slowing, there is a lot to do to stay on track. Like Al Pacino in *Any Given Sunday*, businesses everywhere are advancing the ball inch by inch.

But the ball is advancing. Recruiters around the country tell me that they are seeing demand from clients. This demand is often in new areas and for different services, but it is there. As we meet that need as a sector, we'll advance the ball. The REC is doing its bit too, and we have a new project looking at how our market is changing that will come out later this Spring to support your thinking.

We aren't alone in facing the hard yards. As he approaches the Budget, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt is beset with challenges. Everyone knows that the only way to low taxes and sustainable services is private sector growth. The question is how do we get there.

The REC has been clear: we need to go beyond tax and spend alone. Unlocking real progress in our economy will be about getting the government departments that don't currently realise they can contribute to start doing their bit for growth.

From the Home Office's work on digital identity checks and immigration, to the Department for Education's role in Apprenticeship Levy reform and childcare, to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's part in regulation reform, it has become too easy for parts of government to forget that they need to back businesses as we advance the ball. That must change. The success of British businesses – including in our fantastic recruitment and staffing sector – is the prosperity of our country.

(And if anyone knows a 24-year-old hall-of-fame potential quarterback, send him to Green Bay, Wisconsin...)

If you want to keep up to speed with all things recruitment then follow me on Twitter [@RECNeil](#)



CAMPAIGNS

DfE must learn from failed NHS procurement plan

Shazia Ejaz, Director of Campaigns at the REC

In our submission to the Chancellor ahead of his Spring Budget on 15 March, we laid out our wants and policy suggestions with our members' interests top of mind. You won't be surprised that we mentioned the apprenticeship levy and childcare reform. Another focus was to change public sector procurement processes. We spelt it out like this: *"The government is an employer, but too often its approach to public sector procurement is inefficient, risky, and doesn't provide best value for money. Chasing lowest cost provision has reduced the range and quality of provision government can achieve – this costs more in the long run... the way the NHS procures staff is a good example of this, but we're seeing the issue elsewhere too, including via the Public Sector Resourcing framework. The cost-to-bid on a framework of this size is likely to leave the Government with relatively few bidders, and more limited competition."*

The REC is responding to a Department for Education (DfE) consultation on its new framework for child and family social workers in England. Our goal is to avoid the mistakes made by the NHS in its approach to agencies, frameworks and staff banks.

We all know that public sector employers are under unique pressure to keep their costs down – especially after Covid. This has led some parts of government, including NHS England and BSO in Northern Ireland, to create workforce frameworks. Too often, these are not working. NHS England's frameworks don't reflect reality. The absence of a long-term workforce strategy and years of disengagement with suppliers has resulted in a burgeoning off-framework market. To ensure value for money, deliver efficiency and respond to labour and skills shortages, recruiters must be consulted when designing staffing frameworks. We all want better care and shorter waiting lists. If the DfE pushes ahead with a notion that the solution to the social care workforce crisis is to blame agencies and copy the NHS model, it could not be more wrong.

the intelligence...

The rise of green jobs – and of a green jobs skills gap

By Norah Song, Research Manager at the REC

It is just under four years since the UK became the first major economy in the world to commit to reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The UK's green transition is more important than ever given the impact of high energy prices. Green jobs are increasing, but research shows that the green skills gap is slowing this transition.

The REC's **Labour Market Tracker**, which is created using job postings data from our research partner **Lightcast**, identifies green jobs as those that work to reduce net carbon emissions and/or help to protect the environment. The tracker found that adverts for green jobs, including environmental and waste management roles, have risen rapidly since June 2020. Between December 2021 and December 2022, there was an 8.3% increase in green job vacancies.

Given the shock of energy shortages, and consequently high energy prices, the growth of green jobs shows that the UK's green transition is even more essential to reduce reliance on conventional energy. **PwC's Green Jobs Barometer** highlighted that green jobs are now growing at around four times the rate of the UK's overall employment market. With the ongoing labour shortages that the UK is experiencing, the green skills gap is growing even more significantly.

According to the REC's latest **JobsOutlook** survey, more than six in ten employers (65%), including 72% of those who recruit Technical Professionals, per-



55%

More than half (55%) of respondents to the REC's JobsOutlook survey believe that the UK workforce lacks the green skills needed to fulfill the green job requirements, says Norah Song (pictured below)

ceive that the lack of government support will be one of the biggest barriers to creating green jobs for the UK. More than half (55%) of respondents also believe that the UK workforce lacks the green skills needed to fulfill the green job requirements. Investment in training and upskilling is integral to the UK achieving its plans for net zero, economic growth, and levelling up.

Recruiters are vital to match the right skills to the UK's green economy. The green recruitment market will continue to grow as candidates with transferable skills from traditional sectors move to green jobs. In addition, young people are increasingly looking at sustainability driven careers.

A **KPMG** survey discovered that one-third of 18-24-year-olds in the UK claim to have rejected a job offer because of

8.3%

Between December 2021 and December 2022, there was an 8.3% increase in green job vacancies.

a company's poor green credentials. Recruiters will continue to be a crucial part of building the UK's green workforce.

Understanding the landscape of green jobs will help your organisation prepare for the future needs of the green economy. The UK's future skills needs are shifting and recruiters can play a significant role in helping to achieve net zero, both within their own organisations and with candidates and clients.



 big talking point

Chattering classes

It's been hailed as a game-changer, but what can ChatGPT do for recruiters and their clients – and what are the pitfalls?

Everybody's talking about ChatGPT, the AI chatbot launched by OpenAI on 30 November last year. Depending on whom you speak to, it is the greatest leap forward since Google, or a terrifying lurch along the road to machine dominance that will enable robotic misinformation and plagiarism and replace human jobs. What is clear is that ChatGPT is the first of many AI chatbots likely to appear in the coming months, and developments in the technology and the ways we use it will come thick and fast.

So, what does it mean for recruiters? For the moment, ChatGPT is free to use, so all recruiters should try it out. You need to know what others are using it for, as well as what it could offer you.

From the moment you log in, the differences from traditional search engines are obvious – type a question and you get a well-written, concise reply (you can specify a wordcount). It is superb at assimilating information from across the web and distilling it into a few paragraphs of straightforward prose – no more trawling lists of websites.

Therein lies one of the pitfalls; the information it offers is only as good as the information available and, without clear sight of the sources of its data, it can be harder to assess their accuracy. The fact that answers are presented clearly and that the system has

mastered the art of 'yes and no' answers, creates an illusion of confidence and balance. It is easy to forget that the machine cannot 'think' about its answers, it only collects and repeats.

Having said this, it is a wonderful tool for candidates who want to research a company or potential career. It can create a tailored CV in minutes and suggest questions they should ask an employer. You can search for candidates and match CVs to a specific role or ask it to suggest other roles for that candidate. It will draft questions for interviews and could provide sample contracts and legal and compliance updates.

At an online forum held by Recruiting Brainfood, participants commented that ChatGPT had suggested questions and ideas that they had not previously considered. Over 1,200 recruiters attended from across the world and most were excited by its potential.

Common concerns were about future costs (how will users be charged and will those without it be disadvantaged?), ethics (should people be informed if their application was handled by AI?), plagiarism/cheating (if candidates use AI to help in tests or to gain qualifications, would it work – and would it matter?) and the recruiter's role (could a candidate bot end up talking to a recruiter bot with no humans involved?).

It seems likely that regulations about the ethical use of chatbots will follow. Problems with algorithms selecting white men for leadership positions on the grounds that such candidates were successful in the past have been well publicised, and this will be an issue while data used by AI systems reflect human biases. There are also questions about reputation, defamation and privacy – if a chatbot gives incorrect or damaging information, it could have serious consequences for a company or an individual.

There is an element of 'buyer beware'. Those who search for information they already know tend to find that ChatGPT makes mistakes that would not be obvious to everyone. In February, Google's share price crashed after keen-eyed viewers spotted a factual error about space telescopes in its advert for its chatbot, Bard. This is a worry, since most people will use AI to fill knowledge gaps.

When it comes to recruiters' jobs, Mike Beresford, Group Commercial Director at Templeton & Partners, is less concerned. "ChatGPT provides a fast route to answers that were already there," he points out. "There are two things that a technical platform can't yet do like a human: apply emotion and instinct; and understand culture and

cultural fit. When you're building teams, both are vital."

As a former 'techie' who has specialised in IT recruitment for the past 28 years, he was quick to experiment with the new technology. AI will only do a like-for-like match for candidates and roles, he adds, whereas a good recruiter should look ahead at future developments and needs, which may be very different from the current environment. "ChatGPT won't innovate or think around what the client needs to meet changing circumstances or to recommend alternative solutions. A great recruiter will ask not just who do you need now, but who will you need next, what skills and experience will add value to your project team or work on the next stage of a project? So this will free up time for the 'Consultant' part of the 'Recruitment Consultant' job title."

AI developers identify and build the data rules the system uses and establish parameters (raising further questions about the power of large software companies), however Beresford advises recruiters and clients using AI to ensure that a diverse team monitors it closely to check for bias or inaccuracies.

"AI speeds up processes and research, but this must be checked by people," he says. "It should help candidates and

Statistics

100 million ChatGPT users signed up in January 2023.

1 million people signed up in 5 days.

It supports more than 95 languages.

Microsoft has committed to investing a further \$10 billion in OpenAI (it has already invested \$1 billion).

recruiters by freeing them up to discuss the important things, but candidates will still need insights from recruiters to help them in the recruitment process. A recruiter can share 'this is what I felt when I talked to the customer about what they want and what their culture is' – AI cannot add this insight. It should do things that enable me to be more human, to think about things, to explore feelings and be creative."

When Beresford asked ChatGPT what

it could bring to his work as a recruiter, it replied that it could "support and augment the processes and decisions" he makes. Attendees at the Brainfood session agreed. One said: "I'm excited about ChatGPT, because I think it encourages critical thinking – if you ask for information, you get so much back and it sends you down different rabbit holes that encourage you to think more."

Others compared it with the invention of the calculator – we still need to use our minds and exercise judgement, but, used well, it enables you to scale up and augment existing work. One person added that they'd been on a faster learning curve using ChatGPT over the past six weeks than they had in the past six years.

"On their own, ChatGPT's responses usually score about a C+ grade," Beresford adds. "This is OK, but do you really want to send your customer a C+ candidate?"

The technology is still in its infancy and new developments will come thick and fast. At the moment, ChatGPT seems unlikely to replace a skilled recruiter and is an exciting tool with potential to inform, speed up processes and inspire ideas. So, give it a try, polish up your human skills – and do not forget to mark its homework.

legal update

How can TUPE affect employment businesses?

By **Melissa Mhondoro**, REC Solicitor

The REC's legal team has seen an increase in questions about whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 ('TUPE') apply when a client asks an employment business to take over staff who were previously supplied by another employment business on employment contracts working on its site. This is known as a service provision change and TUPE is likely to apply.

For example, consider a school that has a contract with an employment business supplying cleaners. The employment business employs the cleaners working on its contract with the school on contracts of employment. The school is unhappy with the service and it asks a new employment business to take over the contract and the cleaners who work on the contract. TUPE applies to the takeover of workers if the main purpose of the workers' employment immediately before the transfer was to carry out cleaning services on behalf of the school.

Employment businesses involved in a

service provision change cannot exclude TUPE from applying. If the legal conditions of a service provision change are met, the employee protections provided by TUPE automatically transfer to the new employment business.

TUPE protects the rights of transferring employees. They keep their legal rights from their original employment, including their length of service. Furthermore, responsibility for any of the employees' current or potential legal claims relating to issues that happened before also transfer to their new employer.

You may ask what your business can do to avoid inheriting/incurred liability. Under TUPE, the employment business that originally employs the workers must supply information about the transferring employees. This information should be carefully considered, and any concerns should be resolved before a transfer. Failure to do this puts the new employer at risk of costly and time-consuming legal claims. It may also be necessary to reach an agreement for either the original employer and/or the

client to cover any costs for inherited legal claims.

The new employer could also potentially incur liabilities. Any dismissals related to the transfer (including changing a transferring employee's employment contract to an agency worker contract for services) are automatically unfair and could result in a claim for unfair dismissal. Changing the contracts of transferring employees to alter their working time and pay without their agreement is also likely to be unlawful.

An employment business can defend itself against claims for dismissal/changing an employee's contract based on TUPE if it can show the changes were for economic, technical or organisational ('ETO') reasons. There are no strict rules about what amounts to an ETO reason, so we recommend seeking specialist legal advice on this.

Right to Work checks: what are the fraud risks?

By **Tony Machin**, CEO at TrustID

Today, a digital Right to Work (RtW) check means you can check the identity of many candidates remotely within minutes of them submitting their evidence. This is great news for recruiters, but, even with digital checks, we are seeing fraudsters trying to gain employment unlawfully.

Current RtW guidance includes two types of 'digital' checks: the Digital Scheme is a digital check for holders of in-date UK and Irish passports; and digital eVisa checks use Home Office issued 'Sharecodes' to prove eligibility for non-UK nationals.

What are the risks?

Fraudulent passports or ID cards. The number of fake passports identified increases each year. In 2022, these made up 45% of all fake documents, up 6% on the previous year. Over half (55%) were British passports, with Irish documents coming a close second.

Digital eVisa fraud has a different profile. Our customers have seen imposters present genuine Sharecodes that do not belong to them. When making physical ID checks, the risk is from candidates physically presenting fraudulent evidence of their RtW eligibility. They hope that your team will not be trained to spot fake documents as well as digital checks can.

How can IDSPs help?

Fraud risks are significantly reduced when digital checks are performed by a certified Identity Service Provider (IDSP). IDSPs can provide expert guidance to ensure that your candidate's proof of identity is genuine. Identity validation services can also include 'liveness' and face-matching technology which analyses a selfie photo against the image of your candidate to confirm that it is the same person. Find out more about digital RtW checks [here](https://hubs.ly/Q01BpIRr0): <https://hubs.ly/Q01BpIRr0>

Symbiotic: using recruitment skills for charity

Q&A



James Reed CBE is chairman and CEO of The Reed Group and chair of Big Give

You were awarded a CBE in the New Year's Honours List for your services to business and charity. Tell us about your involvement with Big Give.

Big Give started in our business 15 years ago and it's raised nearly £234m for over 14,000 charities – my ambition is for it to raise £1bn in my lifetime. It's special because it's a generosity multiplier. It's more than a fund-raising platform, it helps people who want to give money to make a far greater impact. Our match-funding champions (typically foundations, wealthy individuals/families or companies) put money in a pot for charities they support, then short, targeted campaigns invite the public to donate money, which the champions match. This means that every initial donation is multiplied at least twice and sometimes four or five times. I see it as a magic triangle of champions, the public and charities.

Have Reed and Big Give taught each other anything?

The influence flows both ways. When we started Big Give, we aimed to use expertise within Reed to benefit charities. The original idea was based on our jobs site, but it only fired up when we introduced the match element. Since then, Big Give has become an important part of Reed culture. Our staff support it directly and via our Reed Foundation, which owns 18% of Big Give. Ultimately, it's a network and recruiters are energetic people who are great connectors so it's a good match. The relationship is symbiotic. We've now made Big Give self-sustaining and exportable so people can set up similar models elsewhere. I strongly encourage them to do it – it engages and motivates staff and clients and makes people in the company feel good.

What are your recruitment predictions for 2023?

Economic uncertainty will make 2023 more testing than recent years, but I'm optimistic that the recruitment industry is robust. I expect to see more people looking for jobs and fewer vacancies, but not an absence of jobs, so this could be a good thing. Even if there is a recession, I think jobs may be less affected than in previous downturns.

How will the role of recruiters change?

Recruitment is always changing, which is why recruiters must be alert and adaptable. I'm interested in how technology can improve our service and increase our impact. I've been an advocate for technology since we set up our first website in the 1990s. There are risks, but we shouldn't overplay the negatives.

What advice would you give to new recruiters?

I would tell them to find someone who is great at what they do and learn all you can from them. We must reach people in different places, be open to trying new things and develop new ways to connect people. We need ideas to surface constantly. People with ideas will always be valuable.

One idea I've written about previously is that you should think of your career as a game of Pooh sticks – the trick to winning is not the quality of the stick, but the art of dropping it into the fastest flowing current in the stream. Find that current and you'll be carried forward by it.

MPs welcome REC Overcoming Shortages report

Parliamentarians from both main parties discussed our research and pledged to ease the squeeze in the labour market at a REC parliamentary reception

The REC's parliamentary reception in January was an opportunity for the REC to promote its Overcoming Shortages report to policy makers, journalists and industry colleagues.

In her speech, Sarah Thewlis, Chair of REC, highlighted our research findings that it could cost the economy anywhere between £30 billion and £39 billion every year if current labour shortages are not addressed.

Guy Opperman, Employment Minister, called the report "timely, important and greatly appreciated". He assured us that Cabinet ministers are discussing ways to deal with labour shortages – in particular, the need to reduce the number of economically inactive people.

Opperman said that he is particularly interested in REC's wider suggestions on improving access to work, for example, by improving childcare to enable those with caring responsibilities to work without fear about the quality or cost of childcare provision. The REC has asked for a full review of the current childcare system.

The minister said he is keen to hear new ideas from the recruitment industry for attracting older workers back into the workforce. He spoke of his passion for the government's 'Mid-life MOT' scheme – a review for workers in their forties and fifties that will help them to take stock of their finances, skills and health, and enable them to prepare better for their retirement and build financial resilience.

Justin Madders, Labour's Shadow Minister for Employment Rights, praised the insights offered by the report. He said hundreds of thousands of people want to get back into work and Labour's New



Lord Bridges of Headley talks to Sarah Thewlis, Chair of the REC



The REC's Shazia Ejaz discusses our Overcoming Shortages report with Stephen Timms MP



Guy Opperman MP, Minister for Employment



Justin Madders MP, Shadow Minister for Employment Rights

Deal for Working People would help them to do it. The deal would include creating a single status of 'worker' for all but the genuinely self-employed. The REC is keen to understand more about this and to influence thinking about how it would work. The deal would also set up a single body to enforce workers' rights, another idea long supported by the REC.

Lord Bridges of Headley, Chair of the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, said that although the departure of EU workers has been counterbalanced by the arrival of non-

EU workers, this has contributed to a skills mismatch in the labour force, which has exacerbated vacancies and labour shortages in some sectors. He also pointed to early retirement as a major cause of labour shortages.

In his closing speech, Neil Carberry, REC Chief Executive, expressed his relief at signs that a 'strategic approach' to overcoming labour shortages was on the agenda of both main parties, as well as in both houses of Parliament.

A full report on the event can be accessed [at the REC website](https://www.rec.uk.com).



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