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THE VIEW AND THE INTELLIGENCE

REC messages for the party conferences p2



BIG TALKING POINT

Time to consult on employment rights law p4



LEGAL UPDATE

When should we expect legal changes? p6



Q&A

Lessons in business growth p8

REC launches campaign to show temp work works

Voice of the Worker

The Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) is putting the human stories of temporary workers at the heart of its Voice of the Worker campaign to demonstrate to the new government the value of flexible work and role of recruitment agencies in facilitating it.

Research undertaken for the campaign shows more than a third of temporary workers prefer to work through an agency rather than in a permanent role. And one in three temporary workers (32%) can access the labour market only by doing temp work.

The new government is in a hurry to legislate on the employment rights they pledged in their manifesto, but there is real concern that they will create barriers to flexible working in the process.

Our new hearts and minds campaign explains to policymakers how the opportunity to do temporary work, and benefits from the flexibility it offers, can be life-changing in many ways. Many people wouldn't be in work if they didn't have this option. This flexibility is crucial to dealing with the UK's economic inactivity problem.

The Voice of the Worker campaign begins imminently and will feature polling data, plus a series of short video case studies and articles about the work temporary workers do and why they do

it, and the difference that their work makes to them and others who benefit from it. More details on the resources available can be found on our website and we are keen for members to share the campaign content.

By targeting social media advertising and sharing the materials with politicians, we hope to influence politicians and policymakers working on the government's Employment Rights Bill in the coming months. We want to remind them of the importance of agency work for both individual workers and for its value in economic growth.

"As a collective voice for the industry, the REC and our 3,000-plus members are leading the charge to make sure we explain to policymakers why flexible work is so important, and why we need to protect our world-leading temporary labour market," said Kate Shoesmith, REC Deputy Chief Executive (pictured).

"The new government has a big mandate to deliver growth, and this means they need to start with how many of us need, and choose, to work. It takes a partnership approach to understand what is currently working well and where we can make changes that will help workers, while allowing employers to attract and retain talent. The most successful changes to the jobs market have been those developed with



businesses, not just handed down to us," she added.

"We've found that temp work works – particularly for individuals who need flexibility to support their life choices. Curbing flexible working is not a solution to stubbornly high economic inactivity levels or labour and skills shortages."

In the campaign, workers from different regions and sectors across the UK will explain their various reasons for choosing temporary work, including health concerns, caring and studying commitments, among others.

"The campaign will help to explain why we need to support the rights of the one million temps on assignment on any given day across the UK to work the way they want to work," Shoesmith said.

To find out more, visit: rec.uk.com/voiceoftheworker

the view...



Community matters. Too often we forget to look up and out from our own perspective, says **Neil Carberry**, REC Chief Executive

For businesses, the day-to-day has been tough this year. Keeping heads down and ploughing through makes sense, but we shouldn't forget what we can gain from reaching out and expanding our networks. Staring at our feet can mean we miss the lamppost in our path!

Our future will be shaped by factors outside our core business – from the impact of technology to climate change and changing end-markets, we play on the pitch that is available to us. But getting outside means we hear from more people who are also struggling with the same issues. Better networks promote the flow of advice and opportunities to those who reach out to them.

This matters at every level, from supporting recruiters who are deeply rooted in their local communities or specialist sectors and who drive economic impact and change lives, to influencing a new government's regulatory agenda. Keir Starmer's team have come to office with vigour and a large agenda. We need to help them see that recruiters are a social good, as well as an economic one – a solution to problems.

It matters in our profession too. We have been exploring what is needed to build the next generation of our industry. At REC Live in June, speakers offered incredible insights on AI, leadership and the market (you can view the highlights online). In our podcasts, we have explored the need for relationship skills to build durable, profitable client relations. We'll build on that with our fantastic business development event series this autumn.

But the real value comes from doing these things together. For me, the highlight of REC Live was filling our theatre with positive, focused, change-making professionals. I could see how everyone benefited from seeing and hearing each other. Not all answers are on the stage.

Networks matter. We try to provide an important one for you. Joining your sector body is a stake in our profession, not just a vital source of services. Our profession makes a huge difference to one of the most vital parts of anyone's life, their work. But I encourage you to think more broadly still. Good people working together make a better place for us all to do business and create a healthy society.



If you want to keep up to speed with all things recruitment then follow me on X @RECNeil



CAMPAIGNS

Party conferences can't come too soon

Shazia Ejaz, Director of Campaigns at the REC

We have a new government in a rush to implement employment and economic changes, a Conservative party leadership contest, more Lib Dem MPs than ever before, and an end to the dominance of the SNP in Scotland.

We look forward to representing members' views to politicians, policymakers and journalists at all the party conferences. We will continue to advocate for the labour market conditions needed to drive growth, fund public services, and lower the tax burden. We will argue that success in the mission to boost UK prosperity rests primarily on the talent of our people.

Our key message to politicians is that they need to work with businesses and labour market experts to understand how people work and what skills employers need. How can we create the right conditions to ensure we have the skills to support growth? We will use conference season to promote our Voice of the Workers campaign, which highlights temporary workers who explain in their words why they choose to do agency work and the importance of flexibility for their lives.

At the Labour Conference, we are partnering with the Institute for Government to sponsor a roundtable entitled 'Can the government meet the UK's workforce demands without relying on immigration?'. It will be interesting to learn whether invitees agree that successful modern economies are international and higher salary thresholds for working visas rob the UK of key people at a time of worker shortages.

We are also partnering with the CBI to host receptions at the Labour and Conservative conferences. We hope to have many discussions about how diverse ways of working support the economic and social development of the UK. We will highlight our 'Tech-enabled humanity' and 'Labour laws fit for the future' reports and our work on inclusive recruitment.

Let us know if you are at any of the party conferences. We look forward to seeing you there. We will keep members informed of the key debates on our website.

the intelligence...



London jobs market signals confidence

Mukul Tiwari, REC Research Manager

Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner that I am optimistic about the UK economy.

Now that the uncertainty of the general election period is over, business activities are ramping up. This, in turn, unlocks hiring decisions. The recruitment industry and the labour market are showing clear signs of growth.

Employers in London are optimistic and are planning to increase their permanent hiring. The most recent Jobs Outlook survey showed that they intend to increase permanent employees in the next three months by net +33.2, a significantly higher number than employers in the rest of the UK (net +18.4). London employers' outlook for hiring for permanent roles in the next four to 12 months is also ahead of the overall UK figure (net +35.3 compared with net +15.3).

Furthermore, 29.3% of London employers said they will "increase greatly" their permanent headcount in the short to medium term, compared with 6.9% of employers (short-term) and 4.7% (medium-term) in the UK overall.

The positive signs are already clear. The REC's August 2024 'Report on Jobs' for the London region showed that London saw an increase in permanent staff appointments in July after 21 months of continual decline. This has been welcomed as a sign that the labour market in the capital has at last turned a corner.

While the overall UK outlook remained uncertain, London also



Employers in London are optimistic and are planning to increase their permanent hiring

saw a rise in job vacancies and demand for both permanent and temporary workers for the first time in 18 months and five months, respectively.

The latest data from the REC's 'Labour Market Tracker' by Lightcast shows that, in London, higher-level teaching assistants (+21.58%), nannies and au pairs (+20.24%), and hairdressers and barbers (+17.19%) are the occupations that have experienced the strongest increase in adverts in June 2024 compared with the previous month.

The data also shows a growth in vacancies in the legal sector, as adverts for legal associate professionals increased significantly in London (+17.18%). In the UK overall, the increase was far lower at 1.5%.

Job adverts in the IT sector also increased in the capital in June.

Tech occupations that saw large increases in demand include IT network professionals (+7.82%), IT user support technicians (+7.73), data analysts (+7.10%), and IT project managers (+6.81%).

The recent surge in employers' intention to hire, alongside the growth in permanent placements and overall vacancies in London, is a welcome and promising development for the UK labour market and recruitment industry.

The growth reflects a robust demand for skilled labour across diverse sectors, suggesting that businesses are optimistic about the future.

Such trends typically ripple across the UK, inspiring similar hiring practices in other regions. London's job market growth sets a positive tone for the UK's economic outlook and the wider employment landscape.

big talking point

More haste, less speed

The government is in a rush to implement manifesto commitments on employment law, but consultation with employers and recruiters is essential if these are to deliver growth

The new Labour government wasted no time after the election in signalling employment law changes ahead. Many of the proposals were indicated in its manifesto, but the King's Speech in July set a clear direction, with several important pieces of employment legislation now on the Parliamentary agenda. Given the size of the government's majority, there is every chance that these will be passed. But the devil is in the detail and that's where REC advocacy comes into play.

The timing of the July election meant the new Parliament went into summer recess just as business, industry, unions, trade groups and opposition parties demanded more details on the new government's policies.

Despite the apparent clarity in direction of travel, much of the detail is yet to be refined and several areas are up for consultation. The REC will respond to consultations and ensure that its members' voices are heard, but recruiters should watch these areas to identify what the changes will mean for them, their clients and their candidates.

The key ideas in the King's Speech have been widely publicised and include: giving employees full employment rights from day one in the job; extending

equal pay rules to include ethnicity and disability; moving towards a universal National Living Wage (NMW) for all adults by the end of the parliament; eliminating the lower level NMW for younger workers; banning 'exploitative' zero-hours contracts; reforming the Apprenticeship Levy; extending protections for women returning to work after maternity leave; strengthening statutory sick pay; and giving workers rights to request flexible working patterns from the first day of work.

Becci Newton, Director of Public Policy and Research at the Institute for Employment Studies, expects the Employment Bill to spark significant debates along party lines. "The bill aims to improve employment quality for all and contains proposals that will be attractive to individuals, potentially increasing rights, equality and workers' voice," she says. "However, employers may see it as decreasing labour market flexibility and increasing regulation and employment costs, which will affect business and the economy."

The government needs to balance the two views and convince employers that the wider benefits of 'good work' will also help them, she warns.

The details matter hugely. What, for

example, does 'day one' mean? What will the government deem as 'exploitative' versus non-exploitative zero-hours contracts? And what does this mean for those who want the type of flexibility that zero-hours contracts offer. Will changes to the Apprenticeship Levy enable temporary workers and those who require rapid upskilling to access funds for shorter courses (something the REC has campaigned for)?

Immigration is another important factor, particularly given the strong feelings on this subject that sparked riots in August. Employers need skills and, while upskilling is an answer for some, the numbers of people who will be allowed to enter the country to work (and what they need to earn) remains a vexed question.

As Kate Shoesmith, REC Deputy Chief Executive, points out: "Today's labour market is a global one and we need to think about the signals we send to talent around the world. Failure to join up skills and immigration policy could cost the economy £39bn a year by leaving us short on skilled labour."

Above all, the government needs to promote growth to raise money. Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves (pictured) has talked of tough



choices and announced a "big bang" of reforms to grow the economy and encourage investment. Public sector pay rises to resolve strikes have added to government costs, so employment reforms must not undermine corporate growth or dent employers' confidence.

Listen and learn

Neil Carberry, REC Chief Executive, is clear that the sector's voice must be heard to ensure new laws support growth. "We welcome the commitment to a new partnership with business. Only growth can deliver the individual prosperity and funding for the public services we all need," he says.

However, rushed reforms to the labour market will do more harm than good. "Big changes can be successfully delivered when a proper partnership with business is created," he says. "Changes that restrict choice and opportunity for workers must be avoided as they will undermine both the fight against inactivity and the quest for growth."

Confident growth

Businesses need continuity and certainty to invest, adds Shoesmith. "An industrial strategy that gets the people and skills policies right will make all the difference. It is good to see the commitment to a single Budget per year and a business taxes roadmap."

However, further clarity is essential. "Recruiters will be keen to work with Skills England to offer insight into local jobs markets and employer needs. Plans to bring Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service together could help tackle skills shortages, but only if they are funded sufficiently and can draw on the information and insights our members have at their fingertips," she says.

"We back the need to modernise employment laws and give workers clarity on their rights," she adds. "Our recruiters and employers already adhere

to myriad regulations. Enforcing these regulations is what roots out bad practice and gives competitive edge to the good and great UK businesses out there – which is why we have long supported the creation of a Single Enforcement Body. But it needs to be resourced effectively, it needs to be responsible for the whole labour supply chain – including umbrellas – and it needs to understand today's flexible labour market."

Practical clarity

Unintended consequences of rapid change are the main concern of Tracy Evans, Group HR and Quality Director at Pertemps. Her agency works across multiple sectors, so she is used to scrutinising employment changes to see how they will work for different groups of employees and employers, and for the wider recruitment industry. "We need to ensure that MPs really understand the impact that changes will make because unintended consequences can be significant," she says. "We need to look at all the 'what ifs'."

It's essential that MPs listen to what people really want, she adds. "For example, the wording around zero-hours contracts has changed to 'exploitative' zero-hours contracts, but what does this mean in practice? What does 'flexible' mean? Lots of people want flexibility and no good recruiter knowingly puts a candidate into an 'exploitative' contract."

It's vital that the government consults with people who work with these contracts, she warns.

Some of the changes may already be covered under existing laws, Evans adds, so adding further rules could complicate things unnecessarily. If current legislation is little known, or rarely tested, that may mean that people are unaware of it or that it doesn't matter to them.

One change that she is looking forward to is reform of the Apprenticeship Levy. "We need to be able to use the levy pot to upskill people quickly. We pay the levy on our temporary workforce on payroll, so we need to be able to use it to support their development. This will help us to get people into new and different assignments that earn more," she says.

legal update

Employers unlikely to face legal changes immediately

By Rachel Davies, REC Solicitor

Employment law is set for a major overhaul as the new government plans what is touted as the biggest change to workers' rights in a generation. The government intends to achieve this through the introduction of the Employment Rights Bill and the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, which we expect to be introduced into Parliament within Labour's first 100 days in government. This means that the draft bills should be presented to Parliament no later than 12 October.

The full details of the proposed legislation will not be available until the actual draft laws are put forward. Until these are published, it is difficult to determine what exact impact these will have on employers and recruiters. We know from the briefing notes on the King's Speech on 17 July 2024 and other announcements that changes will include:

- A ban on 'exploitative' zero-hour contracts
- The introduction of a single enforcement body to be known as the 'Fair Work Agency'
- 'Day one rights' – the extension of employment rights certain types of workers

are entitled to so they apply on the first of their employment

- The introduction of two categories of employment status – 'Worker' and 'Self-employed'
- A strengthening of the Transfer of Undertakings (protection of employees) Regulations 2006 (TUPE)
- The introduction of a legal right to equal pay for ethnic minorities and disabled people
- The introduction of mandatory ethnicity and disability pay reporting for large employers (more than 250 employees)
- The repeal of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023.

In addition to the two bills, the government is proposing to introduce a 'real living wage' and to remove the national minimum wage age bands under which workers under 21 are subject to a lower minimum wage.

The introduction of a bill does not necessarily mean that the proposed measures will become law. The draft bills will need to pass through both houses of Parliament, which could take months and

may involve several amendments. It is unlikely that it will take effect immediately because there may need to be additional laws and guidance introduced, outlining how the primary bill will work in practice. This typically requires consultation with interested parties, businesses and organisations likely to be impacted by the proposed changes.

Unlike the Employment Rights Bill, the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill will be introduced in draft form, suggesting that this is a slightly lower priority. It is also likely to take longer to become law, because it should involve more extensive consultation.

Some of the changes proposed outside these two bills, such as the removal of the national minimum wage age bands, will not require a change in primary legislation and could be introduced relatively quickly.

New Labour, new laws: temp workers get a makeover!

By Joe Taffurelli, Chief Operating Officer, Liquid Friday



The election of the Labour government has brought a wave of proposed reforms aimed at transforming temporary labour and umbrella engagement. Central is the ambitious 100-day pledge for workplace reform.

The proposed changes are commendable, reflecting a commitment to enhancing worker protections and creating a more equitable labour market. However, their rapid implementation carries the risk of unintended consequences, particularly for supply chains that may struggle to absorb the increased delivery costs associated with higher wages and expanded rights.

One of the most significant aspects of the Labour government's agenda is the formation of a single enforcement body for the sector. This move aims to streamline regulatory oversight and ensure consistent application of employment

standards across the board. For businesses that engage temporary labour, and umbrella companies, this means a more predictable and transparent regulatory environment, ultimately benefiting both workers and compliant providers.

Another issue is the classification system that often leaves temporary and gig economy workers in a grey area and does not reflect modern working practices. By revisiting these definitions, the government aims to provide clearer guidelines, potentially offering greater security for workers and clarity for employers.

As the new government rolls out its plan, the recruitment industry must stay agile. A trusted network of suppliers and advisers should be a priority for every recruiter. At Liquid Friday, we are committed to delivering exceptional service and support to clients navigating these changes.



Growth and renewal in recruitment businesses.

What I know



Ford Garrard is CEO of Auxo Group (formerly The MCG Group)

Organic growth is vital

I joined The MCG Group a year ago. The company had grown rapidly through acquisition from a single construction business to six brands in engineering, technology, education and healthcare. We have 240 people based mainly in the UK, with 50 in South Africa and small teams in the Middle East and Asia. Rapid growth meant that the group needed management with experience in large recruitment businesses to consolidate acquisitions and integrate processes, people and culture. We needed to focus on organic growth and customer service.

A new name for a renewed company We've just rebranded as Auxo Group and

launched managed services to offer a one-stop-shop talent solution called Auxo XPO. Customers want more from recruiters than just people to fill vacancies and we offer a complete service. We are emerging from a huge change programme, including a new CRM system, culture and structure. Staff motivation was crucial – so I've focused on providing regular, honest communication and an open door. Trust is essential.

We are optimistic about our future

The permanent market has been tough for all, but we have benefited from working in several markets. The new government's ambitions to build homes and put money into education and healthcare promise growth in many of our key sectors.

Q&A



Kasia Krieger is business manager at Pineapple Recruitment

What do you do?

We provide catering and hospitality staff from chef level upwards. Our biggest clients are caterers for schools, but we also work with five-star hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants and care homes. When I joined in October, hospitality was new to me, but it's been exciting to learn about the industry – recruitment skills are the same in all sectors. It's all about good communications and understanding clients' and candidates' needs.

How is hospitality faring?

It varies hugely. Accommodation is an issue in some places, and it can help if clients offer a live-in option. We advise clients about, for example, whether pay, transport to work or accommodation is an issue. We have two markets: jobs in

schools offer term-time work and school hours, whereas jobs in hotels and restaurants involve longer hours and weekends.

How are you developing?

We employ eight people and we're growing. There are lots of opportunities in hospitality. We are continuing to attract new clients, and companies regularly come back to us with more new roles, which is fantastic. We also work with Job Centres and support candidates with writing CVs and identifying skills. We always find out as much as possible about the interview process so we can help candidates to do their best. Many people don't appreciate how significant the role a recruiter plays in getting people into work. Finding the right person is a mission.

Learn lessons from Formula 1 racing stars

Hamant Verma, REC Communications Manager



Former Formula 1® business leader and motivational speaker Richard West (pictured) is joining the REC's 'Business development for high performance' masterclass series, offering insights into 'Lessons in Formula 1 to achieve high performance!' in London (26 September), Manchester (15 October) and Birmingham (5 November). How does he believe recruiters can bring the magic of F1 winners into their work?

Colin Chapman was the founder of Lotus. He was a designer, engineer, inventor, businessman and pioneering maverick who changed the world and is famous for saying "Simplify, then add lightness".

The late Colin Chapman is remembered for designing cutting-edge racing cars and continually pushing the boundaries of his industry. His comments regarding the design of F1 cars and lightness are great messages for business today. Someone once said it is not difficult to build a heavy racing car, but it takes real skill to build a lightweight and competitive racing car.

This is reflected in business today, for while technology and different working practices provide amazing tools, the 'weight' of understanding them and using them to best effect can slow us down. Therefore, think like an F1 designer and consider systems and business tools for not only their 'lightness', in terms of integration into the business, but also the ease with which staff can utilise them.

Sir Ron Dennis was founder of the McLaren Group and one of the most successful F1 team leaders. His famous view is: "Focus is thought to be good, obsession is thought to be bad. But

basically, they're the same thing."

My former boss Ron Dennis is THE master of focus, both personally and in terms of business. To be good at what one does takes absolute focus and dedication to the objectives of the business. Personal focus within roles is also important in ensuring that we are prepared for every eventuality.

I believe that, while obsession is similar to focus in driven people, when being focused, we must ensure that we are careful to retain sensitivity and empathy and avoid distractions. We need the strength not to allow external negativity to derail our thoughts and focus on the objectives set before us.

Ayrton Senna, possibly the greatest F1 driver of his generation, is known for saying: "If you no longer go for a gap that exists, you're no longer a racing driver."

Having worked with Ayrton when I worked for the McLaren and Williams teams, I gained an incredible insight into one of the greatest F1 drivers of all time and the nature of his competitiveness. Going for gaps at high speeds involves huge risks, but his comment is equally relevant to business today. Whatever roles we are in, we are employed to deliver results. F1 is a result-driven sport from the outside, but behind the racing there are up to 1,000 people who are all responsible for making the team a success. In this sense, the team is a business with structure, communication, budgeting and sales functions like any other.

I have always said that it is not difficult to achieve 95% efficiencies/deliverables, but the final 5% is the real challenge. This is where the racing team (or business) has to work hardest to achieve results. Once

you are past the '95% rule', you must take measured and calculated risks, and have faultless products and services.

Very importantly, you need to be able to make changes quickly for the sake of continuous improvement and market leadership and competitiveness. If you see a gap in the market, evaluate it and go for it. If it's not for you, pass it by quickly and look to the next opportunity.

Sir Frank Williams was one of the greatest F1 team owners and he became an icon because of his determination to compete at the top despite a disability. He said: "Believe in your dreams, but more importantly believe in yourself; because that's where dreams begin."

Confidence! Humans need dreams and aspirations for these drive us forward subconsciously or consciously. Confidence is essential and it is grown within individuals and the workforce from strong and empathetic leadership. Some are born with more confidence than others, but we all dream. Therefore, reaching out within an organisation for help, guidance, inspiration and help with almost anything is vitally important.

I have always been confident, which is why I have worked in the commercial side of motorsport and become an author, motivational speaker and event host. My confidence comes from research, preparation and rehearsal. So find a mentor who will develop your dreams.

**To book tickets, visit rec.uk.com/businessdevelopmentmasterclass
To learn more about Richard West, visit www.richardwestassociates.com and [@theconsummatespeaker](https://twitter.com/theconsummatespeaker)**

