



## Promises and Policies: What UK Election Manifestos Mean for Employment Law

The General Election is imminent, and we've been following developments to understand what may be in store for employment law after 5 July 2024. In this document, we summarise the positions of the main political parties on key employment issues based on their manifesto commitments. In short, we've read the manifestos so you don't have to.

It is also worth noting that as employment law is devolved to the Northern Irish legislature, the employment law reforms proposed by each party will only apply to England, Scotland and Wales. Separate legislation will be needed in Northern Ireland if there is a political desire to align Northern Irish law.

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Political Party	Overview of the extent of reforms to employment law proposed
Labour	<b>Level of reform:</b> Significant. <b>Manifesto emphasis:</b> 'Change' and 'Make Work Pay'. Manifesto also includes a commitment to implement its <a href="#">'Plan to Make Work Pay: Delivering a New Deal for Working People'</a> in full.
Conservative	<b>Level of reform:</b> Light, continuation of existing policies. <b>Manifesto emphasis:</b> 'Smarter Regulation' and 'Secure Future'.
Liberal Democrats	<b>Level of reform:</b> Significant. <b>Manifesto emphasis:</b> 'Fair Deal'.
Reform	<b>Level of reform:</b> Light. However, depending on the detail, there could be some significant changes. <b>Manifesto emphasis:</b> Reform – " <i>back risk takers and wealth creators</i> ".
Green	<b>Level of reform:</b> Significant. <b>Manifesto emphasis:</b> 'Making Work Fair'.

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Political Party	Worker Status and Rights
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition towards a <b>two-part framework</b> that differentiates between workers and the self-employed only. Consult in detail on a framework.</li> <li>Grant all workers <b>day one rights</b> for unfair dismissal, parental leave and sick pay.</li> <li>Consider measures to <b>provide information for people on their employment status</b> and what rights they are owed.</li> <li>Strengthen rights and protections for the self-employed, including the <b>right to a written contract, action to tackle late payments and extending health &amp; safety and blacklisting protections</b>, in addition to potentially <b>extending union rights</b> to the self-employed.</li> <li><b>Ban “exploitative” zero hours</b> contracts. No prevention of fixed-term contracts, including seasonal work.</li> <li>Ensure all workers have <b>the right to a contract that reflects the number of hours they regularly work</b>, based on a twelve-week reference period.</li> </ul>
Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Silent</b> (the Conservative government consulted on this previously <a href="#">here</a> and decided to keep the current three-tiered system).</li> </ul>
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a <b>“dependent contractor”</b> employment status in between employment and self-employment, with entitlements to basic rights such as minimum earnings levels, sick pay and holiday entitlement.</li> <li>Review the tax and National Insurance status of employees, dependent contractors and freelancers.</li> <li>Shift the <b>burden of proof</b> in Employment Tribunals regarding employment status from individual to employer.</li> <li>Give a right to request a fixed-hours contract after 12 months for ‘zero hours’ and agency workers (not to be unreasonably refused).</li> <li>Reviewing <i>“rules concerning pensions for those in the gig economy”</i>.</li> </ul>
Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Silent on worker status.</b></li> <li>The details are not set out in respect of specific proposals, but its manifesto says that the Reform Party wants to: <b>“Scrap thousands of laws that hold back British business and damage productivity, including employment laws”</b> and <i>“make it easier to hire and fire.”</i></li> </ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers to have <b>full employment rights from day one.</b></li> <li>Bring platform workers under a <b>single legal status of ‘worker’</b>, with <i>“full and equal rights from the first day of employment”</i>.</li> <li>Campaign to <i>“deliver equal rights for all workers currently excluded from protections, including “gig economy” workers and those on ‘zero hours’ contracts”</i>.</li> </ul>

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Political Party	Equalities and Whistleblowers
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduce <b>Race Equality Act</b>, which will include the right to equal pay for Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority people.</li> <li>▪ Introduce the <b>right to equal pay for disabled people</b> and improve access to reasonable adjustments.</li> <li>▪ Change equal pay law to ensure that outsourcing of services can “<i>no longer be used by employers to avoid paying equal pay.</i>”</li> <li>▪ Strengthen rights and protections on equal pay for women, bring into force the public sector socioeconomic duty under section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 (“EQA”) and bring into force section 14 of the EQA regarding the protection from dual discrimination (i.e. where discrimination is because of a combination of protected characteristics).</li> <li>▪ Require large employers with more than 250 employees to produce Menopause Action Plans and Gender Pay Gap Action Plans.</li> <li>▪ Require <b>ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting</b> for large employers (with more than 250 staff).</li> <li>▪ Gender pay gap and pay ratio reporting would include outsourced workers.</li> <li>▪ Strengthen protections for whistleblowers, including for women who report sexual harassment at work.</li> <li>▪ Place a positive duty on employers to create and maintain workplaces and conditions free from harassment, including by third parties. Strengthen the legal duty (due to come into force later this year) for employers to take reasonable steps to stop sexual harassment to “<i>all reasonable steps</i>”.</li> <li>▪ Remain a member of the <b>European Convention on Human Rights</b> (‘ECHR’).</li> </ul>
Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduce legislation to clarify that the <b>protected characteristic of sex</b> in the EQA means biological sex.</li> <li>▪ <b>Silent</b> - no commitment to remain a member of the <b>ECHR</b>.</li> <li>▪ <b>Overhaul the fit note process</b> with a new system which moves the responsibility for issuing fit notes away from GPs towards specialist work and health professionals (see <a href="#">here</a> for recent call for evidence on fit note reform).</li> </ul>
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Require large employers to publish data on <b>gender, ethnicity, disability, and LGBT+ employment levels, pay gaps and progression</b>, and publish five-year aspirational diversity targets.</li> <li>▪ Extend the use of <b>name blind recruitment</b> in the public sector and encourage their use in the private sector.</li> <li>▪ <b>Uphold the ECHR</b> and champion the <b>Human Rights Act</b>.</li> <li>▪ Incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.</li> <li>▪ Introduce adjustment passports to record the adjustments, modifications and equipment a person has received.</li> <li>▪ Make “<b>care experience</b>” (i.e. people who are/have been in care) and “<b>caring</b>” (i.e. people with caring responsibilities) protected characteristics under the EQA.</li> <li>▪ Require employers to make <b>reasonable adjustments</b> to enable employees with caring responsibilities to provide care.</li> <li>▪ Establish a new Office of the Whistleblower, creating new legal protections for whistleblowers and promoting greater public awareness of their rights.</li> </ul>

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Political Party	Equalities and Whistleblowers
Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Leave the ECHR</b> and reform the Human Rights Act.</li> <li>▪ <b>Replace the EQA</b> and remove Diversity, Equality and Inclusion rules.</li> <li>▪ Propose a comprehensive <b>Free Speech Bill</b>.</li> <li>▪ Introduce a <b>British Bill of Rights</b>.</li> <li>▪ Mandate single sex spaces.</li> </ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Require all large and medium-size companies to carry out <b>equal pay audits</b> and redress any inequality uncovered in terms of equal pay and recruitment and retention practices.</li> <li>▪ Push for <b>pay-gap protections to be extended</b> to all protected characteristics including ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation.</li> <li>▪ Ensure <b>disabled workers have the in-job support</b> they need, as well as proper pay and conditions.</li> <li>▪ Commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the <b>ECHR</b> and the European Court of Human Rights.</li> </ul>

Political Party	Family Rights
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement a full review of parental leave within first year.</li> <li>▪ Introduce rights to parental leave from <b>day one</b>.</li> <li>▪ Make it unlawful to dismiss a woman who is pregnant for six months after her “<i>return</i>” (except in specific, limited circumstances, which have not yet been set out).</li> <li>▪ Consider the introduction of a <b>paid carer’s leave</b>.</li> <li>▪ Introduce the <b>right to bereavement leave</b> for all workers.</li> </ul>
Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Silent</b> – proposals are mainly around 30 hours free childcare a week from when a child is nine months old to when they start school.</li> <li>▪ Has <b>recently made some changes</b> (e.g. introducing unpaid carer’s leave, amendments to the right to suitable alternative employment, paternity leave etc. see <a href="#">here</a> for our summary of some of these changes).</li> </ul>
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make <b>all parental pay and leave day-one</b> rights (including for adoptive parents and kinship carers), and extend them to self-employed parents.</li> <li>▪ Double Statutory Maternity and Shared Parental Pay to £350 a week.</li> <li>▪ <b>Increase paternity leave pay to 90% of earnings</b>, with a cap for high earners.</li> <li>▪ Introduce an extra <b>use-it-or-lose-it month for fathers and partners</b>, paid at 90% of earnings, with a cap for high earners.</li> <li>▪ Require large employers to publish their parental leave and pay policies.</li> <li>▪ In the longer term, ambition to give all families (including self-employed parents adoptive parents and kinship carers): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Six weeks of use-it-or-lose-it leave for each parent, paid at 90% of earnings.</li> <li>○ 46 weeks of parental leave to share between themselves as they choose paid at double the current statutory rate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Introduce <b>paid carer’s leave</b> and a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks.</li> <li>▪ Introduce <b>paid neonatal care leave</b>.</li> </ul>

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Political Party	Family Rights
Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Silent</b>, but says that it will:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Introduce a 25% transferable marriage tax allowance, meaning no tax on the first £25,000 of income for either spouse (as soon as finances allow).</li> <li>○ <b>Front load the child benefits</b> system for children ages 1-4.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legislate for workers to have “<b>full employment rights</b>” <b>from day one</b> of their employment. This does not explicitly mention family friendly rights but could encompass this.</li> </ul>

Political Party	Work Life Balance
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make <b>flexible working the default from day one</b> for all workers, except where it is not reasonably feasible.</li> <li>▪ Bring in the “<b>right to switch off</b>” based on a model of “<i>constructive conversations</i>” to build workplace policies, following similar models to those already in place in Ireland or Belgium.</li> <li>▪ Introduce requirements to give <b>reasonable notice of any changes in shifts or working time</b>, with compensation proportionate to the notice given for any shifts cancelled or curtailed.</li> </ul>
Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Silent</b> – but it made amendments to flexible working procedures recently (see our article <a href="#">here</a>).</li> </ul>
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Give everyone <b>a day one right to flexible working</b>.</li> <li>▪ Provide every <b>disabled person the right to work from home</b> if they want to, unless there are significant business reasons why it is not possible.</li> </ul>
Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Silent</b>.</li> </ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “[b]elieve in the <i>right to flexible working arrangements that will benefit women, carers and disabled people in particular</i>.”</li> <li>▪ Support reduced working hours and moving towards a <b>four-day working week</b>.</li> </ul>

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Political Party	Pay and Tax
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>No increase to taxes</b> including NICs, the basic, higher, or additional rates of Income Tax, or VAT.</li> <li>▪ Make sure the minimum wage is a <b>genuine living wage and remove age bands</b>, so all adults are entitled to the same minimum wage.</li> <li>▪ <b>Strengthen statutory sick pay</b>, remove the lower earnings limit to make it available to all workers and remove the waiting period.</li> <li>▪ <b>Ban unpaid internships</b>, unless they are part of a training course.</li> </ul>
Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cut employee <b>NICs</b> to 6% by April 2027 and abolish the main rate of Class 4 NICs for the self-employed. Commitment not to raise the rate of <b>income tax or VAT</b>.</li> <li>▪ <b>Maintain the National Living Wage</b> at two-thirds of median earnings (so on current forecasts rising to around £13 per hour).</li> <li>▪ Introduce the “<i>Triple Lock Plus</i>” for pensions, including to ensure the State Pension is always below the tax-free threshold.</li> </ul>
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish an independent review for a <b>genuine living wage</b> across all sectors.</li> <li>▪ Give staff in listed companies with over 250 employees the right to request shares to promote <b>employee ownership</b>.</li> <li>▪ <b>Review the off payroll working IR35 reforms</b> and implement tax cuts such as <b>raising the tax-free personal allowance</b>.</li> <li>▪ <b>Amend Statutory Sick Pay</b> including by making payments available from the first day, aligning the rate with National Minimum Wage and removing the qualifying earnings threshold. It has also said it will support small employers with Statutory Sick Pay costs and will consult with them the best way to do this.</li> <li>▪ Set a <b>20% higher minimum wage for people on zero-hour contracts</b> at times of “<i>normal demand to compensate them for the uncertainty of fluctuating hours of work</i>”.</li> <li>▪ Create a new <b>carer’s minimum wage</b>, increasing minimum wage by £2/hour.</li> <li>▪ Scrap the lower apprenticeship rate.</li> </ul>
Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Raise NICs to 20% for foreign workers</b>, while keeping the current rate in place for British citizen employees (essential foreign health and care workers would be exempt from the tax, as would businesses who employ five staff members and under).</li> <li>▪ Increase personal allowance threshold to £20,000.</li> <li>▪ Maintain the <b>Basic Rate</b> of income tax at 20% and have the Higher Rate of income tax begin at £70,000.</li> <li>▪ All frontline NHS and social care staff to pay zero basic rate tax for 3 years.</li> <li>▪ <b>Abolish IR35 rules</b>.</li> </ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Campaign to <b>introduce maximum 10:1 pay ratios</b> for all private and public-sector organisations</li> <li>▪ Seek to introduce a <b>minimum wage of £15/hour</b> for all (regardless of age). Offset costs to small businesses by increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,000.</li> <li>▪ <b>Reform of Capital Gains Tax</b> by aligning the rates paid by taxpayers on income and taxable gains.</li> <li>▪ Reform of tax rates on investment income, aligning them the tax and National Insurance rates on employment income. Remove upper earnings limit for <b>National Insurance</b> paid by high earners. Propose a range of changes to VAT.</li> </ul>

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Political Party	Enforcement
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Create a <b>Single Enforcement Body</b>, with union and Trades Union Congress representation, to enforce worker's rights, including strong powers to inspect workplaces.</li><li>▪ Work to further digitise the Employment Tribunal system and <b>increase the time limit on claims from three to six months</b>.</li><li>▪ Enable employees to <b>collectively raise grievances</b> about conduct in their place of work, to ACAS.</li></ul>
Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Silent</b> – previously considered single enforcement body as part of the Taylor Review but this was dropped.</li><li>▪ Recent consultation on introducing tribunal fees (see <a href="#">here</a>).</li></ul>
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Establish a <b>Worker Protection Enforcement Authority</b> to cover issues including enforcement of the minimum wage, modern slavery and agency workers.</li></ul>
Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Silent</b>.</li></ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ “[p]roperly fund the enforcement of workers’ rights and <b>abolish tribunal fees</b>”.</li></ul>

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Political Party	Unions / Collective
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a <b>Fair Pay Agreement in adult social care</b>. The collective agreement for the sector will set pay, terms and conditions, along with training standards.</li> <li><b>Repealing some of the Conservative reforms</b> made in recent years including the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 (see our article <a href="#">here</a>) and the Trade Union Act 2016.</li> <li>Act to ensure that union members and workers can access a trade union at work through a regulated and responsible route.</li> <li>Introducing <b>electronic balloting and workplace ballots</b> for union recognition and strike action.</li> <li>Simplify the process of <b>union recognition</b> and the law around statutory recognition thresholds.</li> <li>Creating new rights and protections of trade union representatives at work.</li> <li>Introduce a new duty on employers to <b>inform all new employees of their right to join a union</b>, and to inform all staff of this on a regular basis.</li> <li><b>End fire and rehire</b> practices, reform the law with a strengthened code of practice and only allow it where there is genuinely no alternative.</li> <li><b>Strengthen rights and protections during redundancy and TUPE processes</b>. In respect of redundancy, it has suggested that the right to collective consultation (currently triggered where an employer is proposing to make 20 or more employees redundant at one establishment within a period of 90 days or less) would be revised so the threshold is assessed by looking at the number of people impacted across the employer as a whole rather than in a single workplace.</li> </ul>
Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue implementing the <b>Minimum Service Levels</b> legislation.</li> <li>Bring forward legislation to reapply the entirety of the <b>Trade Union Act 2016 to Wales</b>.</li> <li>Currently a consultation is out on proposals for reforms to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (“<b>TUPE</b>”) (see <a href="#">here</a>) and to European Works Councils (“<b>EWCs</b>”) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-affirming only employees are protected by TUPE (following the employment tribunal (so non-binding) case of <i>Dewhurst v Revisecatch Ltd t/a Ecourier</i>).</li> <li>Removing the obligation to split employees’ contracts between multiple employers where a business is transferred to more than one new business (following the European case of <i>ISS Facility Services NV v Govaerts and Atalian NV</i>).</li> <li>Abolishing the legal framework for EWCs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Silent.</b></li> </ul>
Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Silent.</b></li> </ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Campaign to repeal current “<i>anti-union legislation</i>” and replace this with a positive <b>Charter of Workers’ Rights</b>.</li> <li><b>Restore the right to strike</b>, remove “<i>arbitrary</i>” ballot thresholds and requirements for postal ballots for strike action.</li> <li><b>Overturn bans</b> on secondary picketing and industrial action for political objectives.</li> </ul>

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Political Party	AI
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with workers, trade unions, employers and experts to <b>examine what AI and new technologies mean for work, jobs and skills</b>, and “<i>how to promote best practice in safeguarding against the invasion of privacy through surveillance technology, spyware and discriminatory algorithmic decision making</i>”.</li> <li>Ensure that “<i>at a minimum</i>” proposals to introduce surveillance technologies are subject to <b>consultation and negotiation</b>, with a view to agreement of trade unions or staff representatives.</li> <li>Create a new <b>Regulatory Innovation Office</b>, bringing together existing functions across government to help regulators update regulation, speed up approval timelines, and co-ordinate issues.</li> <li>Introduce <b>binding regulation on the companies developing the most powerful AI models</b> to ensure safe development of the technology.</li> </ul>
Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Pro-innovation approach</b> to AI (see <a href="#">here</a>).</li> <li>Continue <b>investing in large scale “computer clusters”</b> to be able to take advantage of the potential of AI and support research into its safe and responsible use.</li> </ul>
Liberal Democrats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce a <b>legally binding, cross-sectoral regulatory framework</b> to promote innovation, create certainty for AI users, establish transparency / accountability for AI in the public sector and ensure the use of AI is unbiased, transparent, accurate and respects privacy.</li> </ul>
Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Silent.</b></li> </ul>
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Push for a precautionary regulatory approach</b> to the harms and risks of AI. Align the UK approach with the EU, UNESCO and global efforts to support a coordinated response to future risks of AI.</li> <li>Address any bias, discrimination, equality, liberty or privacy issues arising from the use of AI. Ensure that worker’s rights and interests are respected when AI leads to significant changes in working conditions.</li> <li>Introduce a Digital Bill of Rights.</li> </ul>

If you would like to look at any of this in more detail, the manifestos can be found at the following links:

[The Labour Party Manifesto](#), [The Conservative Manifesto](#), [The Liberal Democrats Manifesto](#), [The Reform Manifesto](#), [The Green Party Manifesto](#).

For Labour, we have also included commitments from its published [Plan to Make Work Pay](#).

Lastly, while it’s not over until the votes have been counted, current polling strongly suggests that Labour is expecting to be the winning party. We have therefore considered the Labour employment law proposals in more detail [here](#).

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