

General Election 2015: What does it mean for employment law?

The General Election will take place on 7th May 2015. A number of employment law issues have featured prominently on the party political stage, including zero-hours contracts, wages, tribunal fees and the role of Europe. But with this set to be the closest-run election in a generation, what differences can be gauged between the main parties when it comes to employment law? And how many of their promises have they been willing to commit to paper in their manifestos?

This briefing summarises the key issues of employment law as contained in the manifestos of the three main political parties.

Issue	Conservatives (Manifesto)	Labour (Manifesto and Workplace Manifesto)	Liberal Democrats (Manifesto)
Zero Hours Contracts	Ban exclusivity in zero hours contracts	Ban 'exploitative' zero hours contracts. Right to a regular contract for those who work regular hours for more than 12 weeks Employers prevented from forcing zero-hours workers to be available at all hours or cancelling shifts at short notice without compensation	Continue to stamp out abuse. Right to request a fixed contract Consult on a right to make regular patterns of work contractual after a period of time.
Trade Unions and Industrial Action	At least 50% turnout to vote for strike action – as well as a majority of those who actually turn out to vote Industrial action in health, education, fire and transport sectors to require the support of at least 40% of all those entitled to vote Tackle intimidation of non-striking workers	Public inquiry to examine the issue of blacklisting	Mandatory arbitration for strikes likely to cause widespread public disruption Encourage wider participation in trade union ballots through electronic voting. Protect the rights of trade union members to have their subscriptions deducted from their salary, and strengthen members' political freedoms by letting them choose which political party they wish to support through such automatic payments

Employee Involvement		Employee representation on remuneration committees	German-style two-tier board structure to include employees and employee representation on remuneration committees
National Minimum Wage and Living Wage	<p>National Minimum Wage to rise to more than £8 by 2020</p> <p>No-one working 30 hours on the Minimum Wage pays Income Tax by 2020</p> <p>Personal Allowance to automatically rise in line with the National Minimum Wage, from the first Budget after the General Election.</p> <p>Encourage employers to pay the Living Wage whenever they can afford it.</p>	<p>National Minimum Wage to rise to more than £8 an hour by October 2019</p> <p>Publicly listed companies required to report on whether or not they pay the Living Wage</p> <p>Use government procurement to promote the Living Wage</p> <p>Make Work Pay contracts to give tax rebates to businesses who sign up to paying the Living Wage in the first year of a Labour Government</p>	<p>Low Pay Commission to look at ways of raising the National Minimum Wage</p> <p>Raise the Personal Allowance to at least £12,500 by the end of the next Parliament</p> <p>Independent review to consult on how to set a fair Living Wage across all sectors, which will be paid in all central government departments and their agencies from April 2016, with other public sector employers encouraged to do likewise</p>
Executive Remuneration	Ensure that Britain continues to have the toughest regime of bonus deferral and clawback of any financial centre	<p>Require companies to publish the pay packages of the ten highest paid employees below the board</p> <p>Require companies to publish the ratio of the total pay of their top earner compared to the average employees</p> <p>Require investment and pension fund managers to disclose how they vote on top pay</p>	<p>Require companies to publish the ratio between top and median pay by 2020</p> <p>Require companies to publish the number of people paid less than the Living Wage (by 2020)</p> <p>Consult on requirements for companies to consult staff on executive pay.</p>
Employment Tribunal Fees		Abolish the current Employment Tribunal fee system. ACAS to oversee a process led by the CBI and the TUC to agree reforms to the system.	Review Employment Tribunal fees to ensure they are not a barrier
Agency Workers	Repeal restrictions on hiring agency staff to provide essential cover during strikes	<p>Remove the 'Swedish derogation' in the Agency Workers Regulations 2010 that means workers who are paid between assignments are excluded from the protections of the Regulations.</p> <p>Ban recruitment agencies from hiring only from overseas</p>	

<p>Family-friendly Rights (excluding childcare)</p>		<p>Increase statutory paternity leave to four weeks</p> <p>Increase the amount of statutory paternity pay to more than £260 a week, and so that dads receive the equivalent of a full week's work paid at the National Minimum Wage</p> <p>Support for grandparents who want to be more involved in caring for their grandchildren</p>	<p>Expand Shared Parental Leave with an additional 'use it or lose it' month for fathers</p> <p>Paternity and Shared Parental Leave to become 'day one' rights</p> <p>Encourage employers to provide more flexible working</p> <p>Consult on introducing five days' paid 'care leave' a year</p>
<p>Equality</p>	<p>Require companies with more than 250 employees to publish the difference between the average pay of their male and female employees</p> <p>Increase proportion of women on FTSE 100 boards in the next Parliament</p> <p>Remove barriers that stop women and disabled people from participating in our workforce, and aim to halve the disability employment gap</p>	<p>Require large companies to publish their gender pay gap</p> <p>Strengthen the law against maternity discrimination</p>	<p>Require companies with more than 250 employees to publish details of the different pay levels of men and women in their organisation</p> <p>Consult on requirements for companies to conduct and publish a full equality pay review</p> <p>Work towards at least 30% of board members being women and encouraging gender diversity among senior managers</p> <p>Monitor and tackle the BAME pay gap. Encourage businesses to ensure at least one place on their board is filled by a BAME candidate</p>
<p>Human Rights</p>	<p>Repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 but introduce a British Bill of Rights</p> <p>Break the formal link between British courts and the European Court of Human Rights, and make our Supreme Court the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK</p>	<p>Retain the Human Rights Act 1998</p> <p>Reform the European Court of Human Rights</p>	<p>Retain the Human Rights Act 1998</p> <p>Take appropriate action to comply with decisions of UK courts and the European Court of Human Rights.</p>

Other	<p>New entitlement to paid Volunteering Leave for three days a year, for employees of large companies and the public sector</p> <p>End taxpayer-funded six-figure payoffs for the best paid public sector workers</p>	<p>Scrap the employee shareholder scheme</p> <p>Consider how to support employee buy-outs when businesses are being sold</p> <p>Review the TUPE provisions on outsourcing</p> <p>Review the Information and Consultation Regulations to examine how information and consultation in the workplace can be made widespread and more meaningful</p>	<p>Ensure employers cannot avoid giving their staff rights or paying the minimum wage by wrongly classifying them as workers or self-employed</p> <p>Two weeks' unpaid leave annually to assist Reserves attending training camps</p>
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