

NEWS RELEASE

GE2017: reed.co.uk gives voice to jobseekers

- From the questions submitted by over 1,500 reed.co.uk users, Chairman James Reed quizzed representatives from the three main parties
 - James Reed interviewed Damian Hinds (Conservatives), Debbie Abrahams (Labour) & Baroness Kramer (Lib Dem)
 - Conservatives: Visa system for migrants must reflect our economic needs
 - Labour: We need better equality at work – pregnant women are being made redundant
 - Lib Dems: Wages haven't been lowered by foreign workers... and Brits won't want to pick strawberries

In the weeks leading up to the election, reed.co.uk, the UK's leading jobsite asked jobseekers to share the questions, relating to jobs and work, that they'd like to ask politicians.

Questions were submitted by over 1,500 jobseekers, which were narrowed down to the top five employment questions they would most like to ask. Issues raised were the impact of Brexit on employment, flexible working, automation, gender equality, wages and skilled workers.

Baroness Kramer (Lib Dems) expressed concerns over the allocation of unskilled work if the UK were to lose out on an influx of seasonal EU workers: "I can't see Brits wanting to pick strawberries". Debbie Abrahams (Labour) warned that NHS and care jobs would be in a "dire situation" if EU workers were to leave the UK. However, Damian Hinds (Conservative) remained decisive on Brexit, describing Theresa May as: "the most qualified to lead Brexit negotiations".

Abrahams addressed maternity redundancy and gender equality, an issue that Kramer was also decisive on: "I do think you need to say to companies if you don't achieve it, we'll require you to achieve it. We need to hang a Sword of Damocles over them".

Robotics and jobs of the future were also discussed, with each candidate admitting that automation is a real issue for employment in the UK. Technology was seen by each party as overwhelmingly positive, with Hinds asserting: "in the past technological change has also created new opportunities".

James Reed, Chairman of reed.co.uk, comments:

“It has always been my view that the best decisions are informed decisions. Given the importance of the decision we all have to make next week, we wanted REED to play an active part in the debate.

Our objective was to give the millions of jobseekers who visit reed.co.uk a platform to ask questions around key employment issues. Over 1,500 questions were submitted and these were then distilled down to the top ten areas of concern.

The final ten questions represent a comprehensive list covering the most pressing issues affecting today’s labour market. Inevitably people are concerned about the impact that Brexit will have on the jobs market, but equally people want to know how jobs will be safeguarded in the face of increasing automation.

We hope that the responses to these questions will help people to make an informed choice at the ballot box next Thursday.”

Download the interviews here:

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Chairman, James Reed, interviewed the three candidates; Damian Hinds for the Conservatives, Debbie Abrahams for Labour and Baroness Kramer for the Liberal Democrats. Questions taken from a survey of 1,538 UK jobseekers.

Key responses from each party representative for each question are included below:

1. How will your party secure a Brexit deal that doesn't damage the economy or lead to jobs being moved overseas once Britain leaves the single market? Daniel from Leeds

Conservative: We will get a good deal for Britain and Theresa is the most qualified to lead those negotiations

Labour: We will be prioritising jobs and the economy as part of Brexit negotiations. Three and a half million jobs across the country are associated with EU trade. We don't want to default on a hard Brexit which would impact hugely on jobs

Lib Dem: I share Daniel's concerns. For Theresa, jobs and employment aren't her priority. Theresa May will go with the things that most concern her. If she has to face people then she must listen to people's priorities. I want jobs, opportunity and business to flourish.

2. What will you do to protect jobs from increased automation and robotics in the workplace? Sam from London

Conservative: In the past technological change has also created new opportunities. We need to make sure we're at the forefront of these and the flexibility in our skills, ability to reskill.

Labour: It's going to be difficult to roll back on development. We're the second lowest in the G7 we haven't invested where we need to. This has had a knock-on effect with wages and we've committed to a national transformation and investing in industries and businesses.

Lib Dem: We do have to think what are the roles that can't be done by machines. We must build a new world rather than hold on to the old one.

3. How will you make sure that skilled migrants continue to be able to come to the UK and benefit the economy? Jenna from Cambridge

Conservative: We must be in a position where we attract the brightest and the best. We'll make sure that the Visa system is aligned to the requirements that our changing economy has in line with our modern industrial strategy.

Labour: When we look at our NHS and care service we would be in a dire position I must say. We must retain their skills and knowledge. We also need to be in a position where we're training our own workers in the future.

Lib Dem: I can't see Brits wanting to pick strawberries. I'm very worried about what will happen across the skilled platform. This is why I despair of this aspect of Brexit. If you're a European citizen and you've got skills do you want to go through a hostile visa system so that you can come to the UK? It's going to be a real struggle to create a visa system that won't be a struggle to allow you to come to the UK

4. With a continuing gender pay gap and under-representation of women on boards, what will you do to counter gender discrimination in the workplace? Pascal from London

Conservative: There is still a pay gap after women have children. We need to shine a light on it and make firms think about it. Flexible working options need to be on offer and for larger companies there will be pay gap reporting.

Labour: I've heard so many cases where pregnant women have been made redundant. We know that 86% of cuts, tax and social security changes in the last seven years have impacted on women. We need to make sure employment tribunals are reinstated. We need a stronger equality and human rights commission.

Lib Dem: This makes my blood boil. It hasn't penetrated down into smaller companies. I'm all in favour of it being done through encouragement and incentivisation. But I do think you need to say to companies if you don't achieve it, we'll require you to achieve it. We need to hang a Sword of Damocles over companies.

5. How will you stop low cost foreign workers coming into the UK to compete for roles here, driving down wages? Derek from Hastings

Conservative: The national living wage is at the heart of this. We've increased government enforcement to make sure people really are being paid the national living wage.

Labour: We believe it's wrong that some employment agencies are solely recruiting from the EU deliberately to undercut on pay.

Lib Dem: I'm not overly convinced that we've seen wages desperately lowered by a foreign workforce, but we will find out. Whether we lose businesses and jobs, or wages go up.

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