

General Election: Trade body urges all parties to prioritise strengthening employment market

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The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) has welcomed the July General Election date, but urges all major parties to ensure skills growth and a robust employment market are at the heart of their campaigns. Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at APSCo commented:

“The UK has been waiting for the date of the General Election to be announced and the uncertainty has impacted business confidence to some degree. While the improving economic conditions aren’t as optimistic as economists and Prime Minister Sunak would have wanted, it is certainly promising for staffing firms across the country and puts an end to the electoral uncertainty.

“APSCo has been prepared for this and we launched our own Manifesto in April, which all major parties are aware of and have been speaking to us about. Our hope having engaged with policy makers is that campaigns between now and the election are built on the foundations of a strong labour market that improves access to skills immediately and in the long term.

“Data that is accessible to APSCo through its members continues to reveal a concerning level of skills shortages in several sectors. We’ve seen the number of people applying for jobs in critical remits such as healthcare, engineering and IT fall consistently throughout 2024. If any party wants to win the votes from the staffing sector, they will need a clear plan to boost the professional labour market. That must include caveats to build domestic talent, improve access to highly skilled international workers and support the flexible segments of the workforce through fair and appropriate legislation.”

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About APSCo

The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) is the trade association for the professional recruitment market. APSCo Global comprises APSCo Asia, APSCo Australia, APSCo Deutschland and APSCo United Kingdom as well as APSCo OutSource, the trade body for the RPO and MSP sectors.

Find out more: www.apscouk.org

APSCo's core Manifesto recommendations:

- Creating the right workforce regulatory environment: through regulatory reforms which protect individual workers, drive economic growth and maximise productivity. This includes excluding highly paid contractors from the Agency Worker Regulations 2010 and reviews of Off Payroll IR35 and the employment status of the professional self-employed.
- Supporting workforce skills growth, training and talent development: through access to more flexible modular training under the Apprenticeship Levy and a greater focus on financial support for regional hubs. Access to international skills also needs to be extended through flexible short-term "project" visas for highly skilled workers and a greater focus on skilled immigration in trade deals.
- Introducing policies that drive fairness and inclusion in the new world of work: to ensure legislation matches the pace of change in hiring and working practices. That includes legislating to boost 'skills-first hiring' practices and encourage people to rejoin the workforce through tax incentives on occupational health, mental health and health screening budgets.
- Harnessing technology for the skills revolution: to drive economic growth, which includes building on the existing 'AI in recruitment' guidance to deliver recognised and auditable standards. Any such regulation should be in alignment with global directives and needs to hold AI developers and technology providers accountable for transparency and fairness in their products.

Find out more <https://www.apscouk.org/public-policy/general-election-2024-manifesto.html> www.apscouk.org