



Better Work Conference 2023

How we can deliver better work for everyone

Tuesday 18 April 2023 09.30 – 14.30

The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR



@LearnWorkUK
#BetterWork23

Welcome to the Better Work Conference 2023



It is great to be back in-person for our 2023 Better Work Conference.

The pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis continue to have profound impacts on UK workers. The pandemic has accelerated many work-related trends, from remote working to the growing importance of digital skills. Some of these are welcome changes to those who benefit but, combined with the more recent cost-of-living crisis, many have seen their living standards eroded, struggled with their mental health and to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Increases in the minimum wage have continued to reduce the prevalence of low pay. Yet living standards have stagnated for millions since the 2008 financial crisis and levels of progression from low pay are limited. Wage stagnation and cost-of-living pressures have led to a rise in industrial unrest, with the highest number of working days lost to strikes in December 2022 since 2011.

Increases to the minimum wage need to be part of a wider strategy for good work, particularly as some employers with a high proportion of low-paid workers may respond to a higher wage floor by using more insecure job contracts or cutting non-pay benefits.

The Better Work Network – which now has over 800 members – looks at pay and progression, alongside other important aspects of job quality, including having security, flexibility and a voice at work.

The conference programme is designed to explore evidence-based policy and practice solutions and new ideas around different dimensions of job quality:

- How do we ensure that low paid workers have opportunities to training and development opportunities that support their progression and career ambitions?
- How do we protect workers from financial hardship if they leave work or their circumstances change?
- What are the links between job quality and health, and how can we create healthy workplaces for all?
- How do we improve and raise awareness of workers' rights and working conditions?
- How is the quality of work changing, how is this impacting on different groups of workers and what are the priorities for policy change?

There are some huge challenges and opportunities to discuss – and lots of good practice and ideas to share.

Thank you for joining and contributing to what promises to be an engaging set of discussions and networking opportunities.

Naomi Clayton Deputy Director of Research and Development, Learning and Work Institute


The Better Work Network is a policy and practice-based initiative dedicated to supporting progression from low pay and increasing the quality of work for all. The network brings together over 1,000 stakeholders and influencers, including central and local government, think-tanks, charities, workers, employers, and practitioners. Working together with our members we:

- **Put the voice of workers at the heart of the conversation around the quality of work.**
- **Share evidence and insight to help policymakers recognise the importance of better work.**
- **Influence and advocate for change that could make a difference to workers.**

 You can find out more about our work [here](#)



Full Programme: 18 April, 2023

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09:00 Registration and refreshments

09:30 Welcome and introductory remarks (Conference Hall)

Stephen Evans, Chief Executive, Learning and Work Institute
Manny Hothi, Chief Executive, Trust for London

09:45 – 10:25 Keynote address and discussion (Conference Hall)

Neil Carberry, Chief Executive, Recruitment and Employment Confederation

10:30 – 11:20 Breakout 1:

Building Pathways to Success: How workforce development can support business growth and create progression pathways for low paid workers
(Meeting Room 5+6, Third Floor)

This panel discussion will outline the benefits of workforce development in boosting both business and communities. We will also discuss drivers and impact of underinvestment. The session will explore approaches to designing development pathways and increasing employer investment in training and skills development. The panelists will also focus on opportunities to build a skills system that is responsive to the needs of employers and workers, ultimately leading to greater productivity, job satisfaction, and progression.

Chair:

Naomi Clayton, Deputy Director of Research and Development, Learning and Work Institute

Speakers:



Simon Ashworth,
Director,
AELP



Julia Jones,
Learning and Skills
Policy Officer, TUC



David Sheen,
Head of Public Affairs,
UK Hospitality

10.30 –
11.20

Breakout 2:

Improving the Safety Net: Tackling hardship by improving the support and protection available to workers (Conference Hall)

This panel discussion will focus on the safety net available to workers, including Universal Credit and other benefits, sick pay, maternity and paternity pay, and workplace benefits. The session will examine how the social security system has changed over recent years, and how this has impacted on low-income workers. Panellists will explore opportunities for support services and stakeholders to improve worker access to the safety net. The panellists will also discuss how national and local leaders can work to build a safety net that reduces financial hardship.

Chair: **Naomi Phillips**, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Policy and Research, Learning and Work Institute

Speakers:



Tom Rahilly,
Assistant Director for
Communities and Social
Policy, GLA



Gail Irvine,
Head of Business
Development, LWF



Bruna Boscaini,
Director,
IRMO



Thomas Lawson,
Chief Executive,
Turn2us

11:25 –
11:35

Coffee break and networking

11:40 –
12:30

Breakout 3:

Creating Healthy Workplaces: Exploring the vital link between job quality and health & wellbeing

(Meeting Room 5+6, Third Floor)

This panel discussion will explore the critical link between job quality and the health & wellbeing of workers. We will examine how poor quality work can negatively impact health, and how promoting healthy workplaces can support better work. The session will address intersectional inequalities in worker health and wellbeing and discuss the role of employers, health services, and policymakers in creating healthy workplaces.

Chair: **Jill Rutter**, Head of Programme and Policy, Learning and Work Institute

Speakers:



David Finch,
Deputy Director,
Health Foundation



Elizabeth Bachrad,
Head of Programme
Strategy,
Business for Health



Conor D'Arcy,
Head of Research and
Policy, Money and Mental
Health Institute



Voirrey Walsh,
Head of Workforce
Skills,
NHS Employers

11:40 –
12:30

Breakout 4:

Improving Workers' Rights: Advocating for better worker rights and working conditions through collaboration and partnership

(Conference Hall)

This panel discussion will focus on the importance of worker rights and how working conditions can be improved. The panellists will explore the role of worker representation, unions, and support services in improving access to and awareness of worker rights, and discuss how government can work with business and other stakeholders to advance worker rights and support better work.

Chair: **Stephen Evans**, Chief Exec, Learning and Work Institute

Speakers:



Victoria Speed,
Director,
ELAN



Afzal Rahman,
Policy Officer,
TUC



Adis Sehic,
Policy and
Research Officer,
Work Rights Centre



**Morgan
Teeple-Hopkins**,
Assistant Helpline
Knowledge Manager,
ACAS

12.35–
13:25

Plenary Session:

The future of work - How we can deliver better work for everyone

(Conference Hall)

The plenary session will bring together prominent experts to discuss policy priorities for improving job quality and how we can work together to make work better for everyone. The session will explore drivers and impacts of trends in job quality, with an emphasis on the intersectional inequalities facing workers. Panellists will offer insight on policy and practice solutions that can improve job quality and progression, including practical ideas around how attendees can work with workers, business and wider stakeholders to improve access to high quality jobs and boost the living standards of workers.

Chair: **Naomi Clayton**, Deputy Director of Research and Development, Learning and Work Institute

Speakers:



Ashwin Kumar,
Professor of Social Policy,
Manchester Metropolitan
University



Emily Andrews,
Deputy Director for
Work, Centre for
Ageing Better



Arinola Edeh,
Principal and Head
of Service, Westminster
Adult Education Service



Emma Stewart,
Co-founder,
Timewise

13:25 –
13:35

Closing remarks (Conference Hall)

Stephen Evans, Chief Executive, Learning and Work Institute

13.40 –
14:30

Networking lunch

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Programme at a glance

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10:30-11:20	Breakout 2: Improving the Safety Net: Tackling hardship by improving the support and protection available to workers	(Conference Hall)
11:25-11:35	Coffee break and networking	
11:40-12:30	Breakout 3: Creating Healthy Workplaces: Exploring the vital link between job quality and health & wellbeing	(Meeting Room 5+6, Third Floor)
11:40-12:30	Breakout 4: Improving Workers' Rights: Advocating for better worker rights and working conditions through collaboration and partnership	(Conference Hall)
12:35-13:25	Plenary Session: The future of work - How we can deliver better work for everyone	(Conference Hall)
13:25-13:35	Closing remarks	(Conference Hall)
13:40-14:30	Networking lunch	

