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## Artificial Intelligence

UNISON backs the TUC's warning that employment law is failing to keep pace with the rapid expansion of AI in the workplace



## New manifesto defends workers' rights from AI

**UNISON has signed up to a TUC manifesto designed to protect workers' rights as technology increases in the workplace.**

The manifesto, Dignity at work and the AI revolution, is based on a new report that says that employment law is failing to keep pace with the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) at work - which could lead to widespread discrimination and unfair treatment.

TUC president Frances O'Grady said this was "a crucial moment in the AI-driven technological workplace revolution."

The report highlights how the use

of AI has been accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic, with AI-powered technologies now making "high-risk, life changing" decisions about workers' lives, such as selecting candidates for interview, day-to-day line management, performance ratings, shift allocation and deciding who is disciplined or made redundant.

One of the more shocking findings is that AI is being used to analyse facial expressions, tone of voice and accents in order to

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assess candidates' suitability for roles.

The report says that unless urgent new legal protections are put in place, workers will become increasingly vulnerable and powerless to challenge "inhuman" forms of AI performance management.

To that end, the TUC has issued a joint call to tech companies, employers and government to support a new set of legal reforms for the ethical use of AI at work. These include:

- a legal duty on employers to consult trade unions on the use of "high risk" and intrusive forms of AI in the workplace;
- a legal right for all workers to have a human review of decisions made by AI systems, so they can challenge decisions that are unfair and discriminatory;
- amendments to the UK general data protection regulation (UK GDPR) and Equality Act to guard against discriminatory algorithms;
- a legal right to 'switch off' from work, so workers can create "communication free" time in their lives.

Introducing the manifesto, Ms O'Grady comments: "Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the way we work and, alongside boosting productivity, offers an opportunity to improve working lives.

"But new technologies also pose risks: more inequality and discrimination, unsafe working conditions, and unhealthy blurring of the boundaries between home and work

"Our prediction is that, left unchecked, the use of AI to manage people will also lead to work becoming an increasingly lonely and isolating experience, where the joy of human connection is lost."

UNISON president Josie Bird, who signed the manifesto pledge for the union, said: "The

manifesto has come just at the right time.

COVID and the increase in home working has seen a rise in intrusive AI use in workers' lives.

"AI and digitalised technology are growing in all our jobs - and we need to plug the gaps in protections. We need these reforms in the law to ensure all workers are treated fairly and without discrimination."

Ms Bird noted that, along with proposals for change, the manifesto "highlights the values we should all adopt to make sure that technology at work is for the benefit of everyone."

Read the manifesto [here](#)