

# Labour would use AI to help people find jobs, says Jonathan Ashworth

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Labour would use artificial intelligence to help those looking for work prepare their CVs, find jobs and receive payments faster, according to the party's shadow work and pensions secretary. Jonathan Ashworth told the Guardian he thought the Department for Work and Pensions was wasting millions of pounds by not using cutting-edge technology, even as the party also says AI could also cause massive disruption to the jobs market. Both Ashworth and Lucy Powell, the shadow digital secretary, are making speeches on Tuesday about AI as the party hones its policies concerning one of the fastest-moving areas in the technology industry. But while Ashworth will talk up the potential benefits of the technology for public services, Powell will say it can leave workers disempowered and excluded. Ashworth will say AI could make as big a difference to job-seeking as when the Blair government set up Jobcentre Plus in 2002. "Jobcentre Plus services was an important reform of the Blair/Brown years, but it needs to get better at getting people back into work," he will say. "DWP broadly gets 60% of unemployed people back to work within nine months. I think by better embracing modern tech and AI we can transform its services and raise that figure." Both Labour and the Conservative government have been rushing to update their AI policies in recent weeks to keep up with how quickly the technology is developing. The advent of ChatGPT, coupled with warnings from some of those at the forefront of the industry about the damage it could do to humans, have forced both parties to look into how it should both be regulated and used by the public sector. Speaking at an AI industry event in London on Tuesday, Powell will say the technology could trigger a second deindustrialisation, causing major economic damage to entire parts of the UK. She will highlight the risk of "robo-firing". There was a recent case in the Netherlands where drivers successfully sued Uber after claiming they were fired by an algorithm. She will say in her speech: "Workers can either be empowered or excluded by technology, finding themselves on the wrong side of biased algorithms and robot firing." Powell has previously called for a licensing regime for those working on large datasets for AI tools, which would force them to provide transparency to users and policymakers about what they are using and how. Ashworth will strike a more upbeat note on the possibility of algorithms reshaping public services. He will say Labour would use AI in three particular areas. Firstly, it would make more use of job-matching software, which can use the data the DWP already has on people looking for work to pair them up more quickly with prospective employers. Secondly, the party would use algorithms to process claims more quickly. And thirdly, it would use AI to a greater extent to help identify fraud and error in the system. DWP already has a pilot scheme to use AI to find organised benefits fraud, such as cloning other people's identities. Ashworth said, however, humans would always be required to make the final decisions over jobs and benefit decisions, not least to avoid accidental bias

and discrimination.