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Boris Johnson warns 'huge numbers' of Brits will need to change jobs in Covid-19 wake

Mr Johnson said the coronavirus had accelerated changes that were already taking place in retail and hospitality



 Mr Johnson suggested the workforce of 2030 would love very different to the workforce of today

(Image: PA)

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Boris Johnson has warned that the UK's coronavirus economic collapse will mean more people will have to change jobs in the coming years.

Mr Johnson's stark picture of the job market came as he set out a package of measures to help people gain new skills, including the promise of free courses for those who lack A-level equivalent qualifications.

Mr Johnson said the **coronavirus** had accelerated changes that were already taking place in retail and hospitality.

"Before Covid, people were already shopping ever more online, were already sending out for food," he said.

"But the crisis has compressed that revolution."

Under the plan, the new "lifetime skills guarantee" would allow people to retrain with the cost picked up by the taxpayer.



Mr Johnson made the announcement at a speech in Exeter (Image: POOL/AFP via Getty Images)

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"The British economy is in the process of huge and rapid change, driven by the internet and the possibilities of remote communication," Mr Johnson said.

"But as old types of employment fall away, new opportunities are opening up with dizzying speed – vast new sectors in which this country already leads or can lead the world."

Asked about warnings for retail jobs, the Prime Minister said: "I'm not going to say that any particular sector faces some fatal or mortal change, I think of all kinds of ways sectors will continue to evolve.

"But there will be change. And not every job will be the same."

Outlining the scale of the challenge, the Prime Minister said: "Of the workforce in 2030, 10 years from now, the vast majority are already in jobs right now.

"But a huge number of them are going to have to change jobs – to change skills – and at the moment, if you're over 23, the state provides virtually no free training to help you."



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**Mr Johnson announced more support for vocational training** (Image: PA)

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The offer of free courses will be available from April in England, and will be paid for through the National Skills Fund – which will be topped up with an additional £2.5 billion.

Currently only people aged under 23 qualify for a free first full level three qualification – the equivalent of an A-level.

Higher education loans will also be made more flexible, allowing adults and young people to space out their study across their lifetimes, and apprenticeships will be expanded.

Digital “boot camps” will see employer-led, short, flexible training courses for adults linked to guaranteed interviews.

Mr Johnson said he wanted to end the “snooty” distinction between vocational and academic qualifications as he acknowledged other countries had outperformed the UK.

“Our economy has been shaken by Covid, and in the hand-to-mouth scrabbings of the pandemic the shortcomings of our labour market – and our educational system – have been painfully apparent,” he said in a speech in Exeter.

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