

UNISON' and UNITE Trade Unions Official Response to the Budget Proposals to reduce the Welfare Rights capacity and staffing by 50%

The Trade Unions are completely baffled and angry at the Departments decision to reduce the Welfare Rights service by £250,000 which will cost approximately 15 excellent staff their jobs.

Just a few basic facts from the Welfare Rights Service Annual Report 2008/09 shows that to remove the ability to perform such services to the general public will increase dependency on Local Authority Services rather than maintain the excellent current advice so service users can claim the correct central controlled national funding.

This increases Service Users (Tax Payers) to remain in control of their lives

In the year 2008/09 the service advised over 6,000 individuals on benefit and Tax Credit queries, this meant **£9.46 million** in extra pensions, Tax Credits and social benefits. This feat alone means huge revenue for the local economy also that services where required can be financed by central funding and not a strain to the Local Authority.

- The Service generates income of nine times the cost of its service, so where is the common sense to this decision.
- This service is currently in huge demand due to the economic downturn.
- **Cllr Kay Cutts, advises “Help is at Hand”** when she was interviewed on the Politics Show, as she advises the vulnerable whose charges were to increase for homecare by 36% and increase to the most frail for Day Care, services and transport, that they should contact the **Welfare Rights Service, in order to establish all the correct entitlements.**
- **“County News”** states **“Help is at Hand”** the Newspaper sent to all homes in Nottinghamshire has the full details in bold of all the Welfare Rights Contact numbers.
- The Welfare Rights Service is the only specialist service which disadvantaged service users can use when challenging decisions at Tribunals and have a 78% success rate, during this period they represented 220 Nottinghamshire Residents to achieve the correct payments owed.

The advice to over 6,000 tax payers and even more support to professionals and advisers throughout the service, is in UNISON's and UNITE's view invaluable and immeasurable. The Tax Payers of Nottinghamshire and other Professionals will suffer greatly if this unreasonable and what appears ridiculous and unmerited proposal is carried through. Why has this proposal been suggested? It will cost revenue, Cost Redundancy Payments, Cost Service Users Independence, destroy families and valued careers.

This proposal makes NO clear recognised Authority savings at the expense of huge revenue lost. The proposal is foolhardy and The Trade Unions challenge the proposal as unfair and unreasonable when UNISON has already challenged, that other efficiency savings should be sort first. We request this proposal is withdrawn.

Grace Perry UNISON Convenor and Steven Robinson

UNITE - 10/1/2010