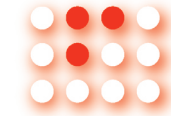


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TUC Aid – Haiti Earthquake Appeal

TUC Aid is making an appeal to affiliates, union members and to the general public for funds for emergency relief and long-term rehabilitation of the victims of the earthquake in Haiti.

All cheques should be made out in favour of TUC Aid – Haiti Earthquake Appeal and sent to TUC Aid, EUIRD, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. Donation can be made securely online by clicking on the link below.

https://secure.justgiving.com/process/whitelabel/default.asp?_whitelabelid=1004

Weekly earnings data are distorted by media

The government statistician, the Office for National Statistics, has replaced the monthly average earnings index with money figures for showing average weekly earnings (see *FS3*).

The change, however, has not been without controversy. The main media immediately picked up on the fact that the latest figures for November showed an average weekly wage of £459 in the

public sector – an increase of 3.9% on the year before. Meanwhile, the new figures show that average weekly earnings for the whole economy rose by 0.9% on a year ago to £451 a week. And in the private sector, average weekly earnings were just £447 and had increased by only 0.1% on the same month 2008.

But the media concern over the rates of public sector pay was “a smokescreen” to distract from the high-level of City bonuses, according to the general union Unite.

Gail Cartmail, Unite assistant general secretary for the public sector, said that the right-wing media was “distorting” the pay picture to attack the wages of nurses, local government workers, and teachers to obscure “the continuing obscene bonus culture still rife in the City”.

The media chose to use the main public sector figure, which includes the nationalised banks. Once they are stripped out, the figure for the public sector excluding financial services, is £453 a week and the annual increase is only 2.6%.

Freeze Local Government Employers, the body which represents the councils, has turned down a 2.5% pay claim from unions and said instead that pay will be frozen this year.

The main unions representing 1.6 million workers are calling on the LGE to think again, saying that

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local government workers will struggle to afford basic essentials, with nearly 3% inflation rendering the pay freeze a real terms pay cut.

The unions are calling for them to come to their senses and make a reasonable offer, saying that there is room in council budgets to give workers decent pay.

www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lmsuk0110.pdf

www.unitetheunion.com/news_events/latest_news/pay_statistics_%e2%80%98distorted%e2%80%99_to.aspx

www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1705

Young jobless to get access to 'work'

Every young person who is unemployed for six months will be guaranteed the offer of a job, training or work experience, supported by up to 470,000 opportunities over the next 15 months through the government's Young Person's Guarantee.

Latest figures show up to 100,000 unemployed young people will be eligible to benefit from the guarantee straight away. Despite the welcome fall in youth unemployment, ministers believe it's time to do more and increase the help as the economy recovers.

As the guarantee becomes available across the UK, ministers are calling for businesses to keep Backing Young Britain by creating even more opportunities for young people. They will promise government support to businesses who give young people a job, apprenticeship or internship.

The new Young Person's Guarantee will provide up to 470,000 extra job and training opportunities for young people over next 15 months. The guarantee offers:

- the opportunity to apply for new jobs created through the £1 billion Future Jobs Fund;
- extra training and support to get an existing job – with help especially targeted at key employment sectors with high levels of recruitment;
- work-focused training;
- a place on a Community Task Force;
- help with self-employment; and
- internships for graduates and non-graduates.

To date, there have been over 104,000 successful bids to create jobs through the Future Jobs Fund over the next 15 months, with the first young people having already started work in jobs ranging from housing officers to football coaches. Over 480,000 people, including almost 100,000 18–24-year-olds

have been placed into jobs and work trials through the Local Employment Partnerships scheme. So far, 50,000 employers have signed up to work with Jobcentre Plus through this partnership.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Young people who are desperate to get into the labour market will be grateful that they now won't have to wait too long before they can get help from the government's Future Jobs Fund to access a job, boost their skills and add valuable work experience to their CVs.

"But ... there are almost a million 16-24-year-olds struggling to find a job. It's going to be some time before they have much to celebrate."

Apprenticeships A record 143,400 people completed their apprenticeship in the 2008-09 academic year – an increase of a quarter (27%) on 2007-08, according to data on vocational qualifications from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Statistics also showed that 239,900 people started an apprenticeship in the last academic year, representing the highest number of successful starts and completions ever in an academic year.

www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2010/january-2010/dwp017-10-250110.shtml

www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17480-f0.cfm

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=409702&SubjectId=16&AdvancedSearch=true>

UK has finally come out of recession

As widely expected, the UK economy has emerged from recession, official first estimates show. The quarterly rise comes after six successive quarters of falls. But there is a big question mark over the extent of the recovery and how strong it is.

Gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 0.1% in the fourth quarter of 2009, against a 0.2% cut the previous quarter. GDP was down by 3.2% on the same quarter 2008.

The output of the production industries (manufacturing, energy and mining) was up by 0.1%, and in that manufacturing showed a 0.4% increase. Production was down by 6.3% on the same quarter 2008 and manufacturing by 5.4%.

For the calendar year 2009, GDP decreased by 4.9% on the previous year; production posted a 10.4% cut; and manufacturing shrank by 10.8%.

However, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber cautioned that the figures showed how fragile the economy is: "With the threat of a double dip recession looming large, it would be madness to cut public spending now. Tough decisions lie ahead to get Britain back in full working order."

Manufacturers Britain's manufacturers will only see a muted recovery in 2010 before posting stronger growth in 2011 on the back of export-led growth, a weaker pound and a pick up in world trade according to an economic forecast published by the EEF manufacturers' organisation and accountants and business advisers BDO LLP.

Manufacturing will grow by 1.2% this year before picking up by 3.4% in 2011.

www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/gdp0110.pdf
www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17482-f0.cfm

Equality reps make a difference at work

In workplaces across the UK, a growing army of new union reps is working hard to ensure their workplaces become fairer, more equal places to work, says a new report from the TUC.

There will be some 1,400 equality reps active in organisations in both the private and public sectors by the end of March.

The *TUC equality reps project – extension report* found that almost two-thirds of equality reps (65%) are located in the public sector, 32% in the private sector, and 3% in the voluntary sector.

According to the report, equality reps divide their time between giving advice and information to colleagues, promoting good practice, looking into complaints of harassment or discrimination, and making requests for flexible working.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Equality reps are making a real difference in thousands of workplaces across the UK. Not only does their presence help improve relations between managers and unions, equality reps also help employers avoid costly litigation, and are a reassuring presence for colleagues threatened by harassment or discrimination at work."

Almost two-thirds (64%) of reps believe that their employer gives them sufficient time off to carry out their equality responsibilities, but the remainder

feel they don't get nearly enough time to do the things their role requires them to do.

The amount of time equality reps get to spend on their duties has a corresponding impact on how effective they believe their efforts are in the workplace.

While almost a quarter of reps (23%) say they spend more than five hours a week on equality related matters, a similar proportion (24%) can only spare one hour a week and some complain of having no time at all.

Equality reps believe they could be much more effective in promoting equality if they had more time to carry out their duties. And some have to juggle their union work alongside their paid jobs, which means they are being nowhere near as effective as they could be.

"Introducing a statutory duty giving equality reps the same right to take time out for their union duties as shop stewards and safety reps would make a real difference," Barber said. "Unions had hoped government would introduce this new right and we are disappointed that this will not happen this side of an election."

www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-17468-f0.cfm

Proposals put forward on ageing workforce

A set of proposals for fundamental changes to employment policies to open up more work opportunities for older Britons and address the challenges of an ageing workforce has been launched by the equalities watchdog.

The proposals from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) include: abolishing the default retirement age of 65; the extension of the right to request flexible working to all; overhauling employer recruitment practices to prevent discrimination; and improved training and development.

The economy would be the big winner from the commission's policy. Research from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research think tank shows that extending working lives by 18 months would inject £15 billion into the British economy.

The initiative coincides with the release of a new survey carried out for the commission into older workers' aspirations, barriers they face and po-

tential solutions to these. The results show that the majority of this group believes major changes are needed to attitudes and policies if they are to reach their goals.

A quarter of men (24%) and two-thirds of women (64%) say they plan to keep working beyond the state pension age. Most older Britons do not want to slow down, many want job promotions and others wish to work well beyond the state pension age.

However, structural barriers and outdated stereotypes are forcing people out of work early. While commission research shows employers are offering lower level, part-time work to over 50-year-olds, twice as many older workers want a job promotion compared to those that want to down shift.

Older workers told the commission that flexibility in hours and locations was crucial to keeping them in the workforce longer as they aimed to balance caring responsibilities and health needs with work. More than eight out of 10 (85%) people, who are not working and over the state pension age, say greater availability of part-time or flexible jobs would help them gain a job.

Financial necessity is the most important reason to continue working. Many want to stay working for their current employers, pointing to an opportunity for employers to create a loyal workforce.

The policy, part of the commission's Working Better initiative, aims to address the chronic under employment, low-paid employment and low income experienced by older Britons.

The EHCR will be working closely with employers to develop guidance for organisations to implement non-discriminatory recruitment practices.

It believes these proposed changes will boost the economy, increase flexibility for employers and employees, improve the health of older workers, increase productivity and reduce the financial costs to government in supporting older Britons.

Baroness Margaret Prosser, deputy chair of the commission, said: "Radical change is what older Britons are telling us needs to happen for them to stay in the workforce.

"Employers with a focus on recruiting and retaining older workers on flexible working arrangements are telling us it makes good business sense, allowing them to recruit and retain talent while meeting the flexible needs of their customers.

"Keeping older Britons healthy and in the workforce also benefits the economy more broadly by decreasing welfare costs and increasing the spending power of older Britons."

www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/fundamental-changes-to-employment-policies-proposed-to-benefit-older-workers/

www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/older_workers_employment_preferences_barriers_and_solutions_v2.pdf

www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/publications/workingbetter_over_50s.pdf

Pay freezes hold rise in settlements to 2%

The latest figures from Labour Research Department's Payline database of collective agreements show a median (midpoint) increase in the three months to December 2009 of 2.0%. The median increase in the private sector was 1.9%, but in the public sector it was 3.3%.

Manufacturing posted a 1.5% rise, while in services the rise was also 2.0%.

There is evidence from the database that pay freezes are still on the agenda for 2010. Some employees will undoubtedly benefit from inflation-linked pay rises, but many will be going without a pay rise this year, in some cases for the second year running.

Freezes still account for around a quarter of all settlements (a third excluding existing long-term deals), and are contributing to a pay mid-point that remains at or slightly below its recent 2% trend (1.2% excluding existing long-term deals).

Nevertheless, the latest set of settlements includes many around the 2% mark, such as Aegis Security, The Seafood Company (Macraes) and Engineering Construction.

The LRD figure of 2.0% is higher than two other pay research organisations. According to IRS, headline award stood at 1.2% in the three months to December – down from 1.3% in the three months to November. Incomes Data Services latest figure was a 1.6% rise in the three months to November.

www.lrd.org.uk/index.php?pagid=18