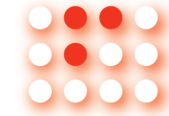


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Annual Subscription £67.50 (£57.20 for LRD affiliates)

Volume 70, Issue 44, 6 November 2008

State pension deal

The government has announced plans to enable people to top up their basic state pension.

The deal is part of a campaign to make state pensions fairer for those who have missed years of contributions as a result of caring for children or relatives and is primarily aimed at women. The Department for Work and Pensions estimates that 500,000 could benefit from the deal.

Individuals who missed out on years of earning will be able to buy up to six years of voluntary National Insurance contributions at a cost of £400 a year. For £2,400 they will be able to increase their state pension by as much as £960 a year.

But the deal is not open to everyone. Individuals must have 20 qualifying years on their National Insurance record and reach state pension age (60 for women and 65 for men) between 6 April 2008 and 5 April 2015. And women who paid the "married woman's stamp" will also not be able to take advantage of the offer.

Britain's biggest pensioner organisation, the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), has described the plans as "window dressing". Dot Gibson, NPC vice-president said: "Up to five million existing women pensioners fail to get a full state pension

because they spent years raising children, caring for relatives or working part-time. Many of these women are now living below the poverty line and will simply be unable to afford to buy back any extra years of pension.

"But the real indictment is that even a full state pension is only £90.70 a week – more than £60 below the official poverty level. Women's pensions are a national disgrace and no amount of window dressing will mask the fact that the basic state pension must be raised across the board for all pensioners to help them avoid poverty in retirement."

www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2008/oct/pens086-241008.asp
www.npcuk.org/

'Social contract' for finance workers

General union Unite has launched a 'Social Contract' for the financial services industry.

Following the government's commitment of taxpayers' money to support the financial services industry, the union is calling on the government and finance companies to ensure that jobs and communities, not executive bonuses, are the priority.

Derek Simpson, Unite joint general secretary, said: "Workers in the financial services are facing inse-

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Published weekly by LRD Publications Ltd, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF. 020 7928 3649 www.lrd.org.uk

curity as the world is gripped by economic turmoil. The Unite 'Social Contract' sets out the principles, which employees expect the government and finance companies to now sign up to."

The Social Contract sets out five principles:

- Recognition of Unite as a key stakeholder in the future of the financial services industry.
- To ensure the employment security of employees in the finance sector.
- To protect and improve the terms and conditions of employees, including pension arrangements
- End the remuneration packages of senior executives, which reward short-termism and irresponsible risk taking.
- Overhaul of the regulatory structures of the financial services sector to include trade union involvement in order to enhance the accountability of finance institutions.

www.amicustheunion.org/Default.aspx?page=9607

Employment and Support Allowance

The government's latest stick to beat benefit claimants with has come into force. And some charities fear it will have a negative impact on people with mental health problems.

From 28 October, the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) replaces Incapacity Benefit and Income Support on the basis of incapacity for work. New claimants will have to undergo a "work capability assessment" and mental health charities are worried that under the new rules, those with mental health problems will be worse off.

The work capability assessment has replaced the "incapacity for work" test part of the personal capability assessment, the process used to assess an individual's claim for Incapacity Benefit. As a part of the government's welfare reform programme, its aim is to get more people working and off Incapacity Benefit as the new assessment has fewer exemptions. It will initially be applied to people claiming ESA, but the government plans to extend it to cover all claimants by 2013.

However, it is feared that the new assessment may adversely affect those with mental health conditions. Mind, the mental health charity, believes that many employers fail to support staff suffering from mental distress, with 200,000 people with mental health issues leaving work and going on to state benefits every year.

According to new research by the charity, after disclosing a mental health problem 31% of people were sacked or forced out of a job, 26% were demoted and one in four had job offers withdrawn.

Unease about the new ESA centres on amendments made to the mental function assessment. The main concerns include ensuring that doctors and staff are fully trained on mental health issues so that they give accurate assessments, and having equal weight given to mental health and physical health. Also, there shouldn't be conditions attached to benefits, which force people into unsuitable work that can further affect their mental health.

Crucially, negative attitudes can be a barrier to people going back to work, so employers should be supportive. Paul Farmer, Mind's chief executive, says: "While we welcome the government's commitment to provide extra support to get people back into employment, it won't work without requirements being put on employers."

There may need to be more emphasis on employers adapting their practices, as while many people with mental health problems want to work and are capable of working, research suggests that fewer than four in 10 employers are willing to take on employees with mental health issues.

Hilary Caprani, a spokeswoman from the mental health charity Rethink, says: "There should be a culture of openness about mental health in the workplace and employers should provide support, for example, through flexible working or access to regular supervision and appraisals to discuss working conditions."

www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/oct/28/welfare-reform-mental-health

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/WorkingAgeBenefits/Dev_015412.xml.html

Premier League pays lower division wages

Premier League clubs should pay "a living wage" to their programme sellers, cleaners and catering staff, the Fair Pay Network says. The call follows a survey which found many of them were being paid the minimum wage of £5.52 an hour; in the organisation's words, "the lowest wage it is legally acceptable to pay".

The Fair Pay Network cites research by the social policy charity the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that £5.52 an hour is not enough to live decently on; it

leaves people in real, material poverty, and the network argues an hourly wage of £7.45 in London, and £6.80 outside the capital, is the minimum necessary for a single person.

The organisation found that many jobs advertised at Premier League clubs, often by companies contracted to provide catering at the grounds, were paying the minimum wage.

Some jobs were for people to serve in corporate hospitality areas. One advert for a kitchen porter to work at Heathcote's at Anfield, the fine dining end of Liverpool's match day experience, specified the wage was the legal minimum, £5.52 an hour. An applicant for a job at Manchester United conference and banqueting was told the pay was: "Dependent on area of work. However, most areas will follow the national minimum wage of £5.52 per hour."

Vacancies at Fulham this summer for people to serve food and drink from kiosks at the ground were advertised through an agency at £6 an hour, while Spurs were looking for warehouse staff in their merchandise division to work for £5.75 an hour. At Chelsea, owned by the Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, Fair Pay Network found catering jobs being offered below the living wage.

"It is offensive," says Mark Donne, Fair Pay Network's director. "Football must be one of the most unequal industries we have: an extremely wealthy sport with people servicing it who are living in working poverty."

A spokesman for the Premier League suggested that if the government believes the minimum wage should be higher, it should pass a law to that effect: "Statutory pay levels are a matter for government," he said. "Perhaps this would be the most appropriate place for the Fair Pay Network to concentrate their campaign efforts."

The pay of the highest paid director at Premier League clubs increased substantially at most clubs between 2006 and 2007 – and is likely to go up again because of the bigger, £2.7 billion TV deal which began last season.

A Manchester United spokesperson said of the gap between Gill's salary and the minimum wage catering jobs: "We are a global business and the challenge David Gill has in managing that is bigger than in an average £210 million turnover business. But at all levels, people want to work for Manchester United. We pay the market rate for both jobs."

Richard Scudamore, chief executive of the Premier

League doesn't do too badly himself. He was paid a basic salary of £590,000 in the year to July 31 2007. He also received a bonus of £410,000 because of the television deals he secured for the clubs. In addition, £213,000 was paid into his pension pot. Sir Dave Richards, the Premier League's part-time chair and only other director, was paid £261,000 for what the league says is a three-day week.

Highest paid director for present Premier League clubs

Club	Director	(£000)
Arsenal	Keith Edelman ¹	2,720
Aston Villa	Doug Ellis ¹	491
Blackburn	John Williams	285
Bolton	Allan Duckworth	418
Chelsea	Peter Kenyon	1,900
Everton	Keith Wyness ²	466
Fulham	Unnamed	276
Liverpool	Rick Parry	1,120
Manchester City	Alistair Mackintosh	293
Manchester United	David Gill	1,480
Newcastle	Douglas Hall ¹	1,620
Portsmouth	Unnamed	907
Sunderland	Unnamed	1,060
Tottenham Hotspur	Daniel Levy	950
West Bromwich Albion	Jeremy Peace	309
West Ham	Paul Aldridge ¹	649

No directors of Stoke City are paid; Steve Gibson is the only director of Middlesbrough and is not paid; Hull City and Wigan do not have to disclose the pay of their highest paid director.

¹ Includes compensation for leaving the club ² Since left club.

www.guardian.co.uk/sport/blog/2008/oct/29/premierleague

Stress and strains are workers' top concerns

Stress or overwork, injuries and illnesses caused by the poor use of display screen equipment and repetitive strain injuries (or RSI) top the list of workers' safety concerns, according to the TUC's latest survey of safety reps.

Three in five (60%) safety reps reported stress or overwork as a concern in their workplace. Concerns about stress are most common in the public sector and in large workplaces, with the highest instances in central government (81%), education (74%) and health services (69%).

Stress was cited as the biggest concern in 10 of the 14 sectors covered by the survey. Noise (manufacturing), back strains (construction, distribution and hotels) and display screen equipment (voluntary organisations) were reported as other top hazards at work in different sectors.

Injuries and illnesses resulting from the poor use of display screen equipment has risen from fourth in 2006, when the last survey was carried out,

to become the second-most common concern, reported by two in five (41%) safety reps. Repetitive strain injuries (40%) are another commonly reported hazard.

Other concerns on the increase since the 2006 survey include slips, trips and falls (up 6%), working alone (up 3%) and violence and threats at work (up 4%).

www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-15500-f0.cfm

Balls rejects London Living wage for staff

The government department responsible for children and schools (DCSF), and headed by Ed Balls, has rejected a call to pay its own contracted staff a London Living wage – the £7.45 an hour recommended minimum for all workers in the capital. The DCSF claims it would be “artificial, inflationary” and not “necessary or appropriate”.

Unions reacted angrily to the statement, which was issued to London Citizens, an umbrella organisation representing, among others, trade union branches in the capital.

Dave Prentis, general secretary of public services union UNISON, pointed out that a “shocking 40% of London’s children live in poverty, which means that millions of families in the city are struggling to make ends meet”.

“The London Living wage is a real opportunity to help these families cope with the high cost of living in the capital – and Ed Balls is only going to make their situation worse with his attack on decent pay.”

The DCSF told London Citizens: “An artificial ‘living wage for London’ could distort labour markets and prove poor value for money. Moreover, in seeking to reflect perceptions of the cost of living, this proposal could also raise inflation expectations at a time when increased vigilance is needed on inflationary risks. We do not believe it is necessary or appropriate.”

The department said its line had been agreed with the Treasury, which felt that paying the London living wage would do little to help child poverty.

Yet a London Child Poverty Pledge document with the logos of three government departments – DCSF, Treasury and work and pensions – says: “Tackling

child poverty in London requires national, regional and local government, delivery agencies and their partners to do more to help families to raise their incomes, and to improve the outcomes of children and their families.” And an example of what could be contained in the pledge includes: “From October 2008, we will ensure all staff in our organisation, and sub-contracted agencies, are paid the London living wage.”

Neil Jameson, the lead organiser of London Citizens, said: “We are amazed at the contradictory messages given by the government. On the one hand, they are encouraging anybody who works with children to build a living wage into their employment contracts. On the other, they are refusing to do so themselves and rejecting it as inflationary.”

Mark Serwotka, the general secretary of the PCS union, which represents low-paid civil servants, said: “There is nothing artificial about the financial hardship the people who keep this country running face.”

www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/nov/04/ed-balls-poverty-wages
<http://213.86.122.139/docs/child-poverty-pledge.pdf>

City fat cats

Some people in the City don't have to worry about the London Living wage. The unnamed highest paid director at finance group Jupiter Asset Management had a good 2007 picking up £13.56 million in pay and bonuses, according to accounts filed at the company watchdog Companies House.

Five other highly paid directors, who do not have to be named under company law, feature in the table below.

The biggest earner, however, was David Harding, a director of Winton Capital Management, who owns over 1.3 million shares in the company. He received over £41.6 million in dividends from those shares last year.

Company (year end)	Highest paid director (£000)
Jupiter Asset Management (12.07)	13,562
Walter Scott & Partners (12.07)	9,428
Winton Capital Management (12.07)	7,432
Credit Suisse Securities (Europe) (12.07)	1,844
Clayton, Dubilier Rice (12.07)	1,292
Man Investments (3.08)	1,113

Source: Company annual accounts