



The Week that was

Indeed, we are all in this together.

This week the papers reported that thousands more jobs were at risk. On the other side Pensions Minister Steve Webb announced that there needed to be seismic changes to our pensions system, moving to "**Defined Aspiration**" pensions which are less risky and costly than traditional "**Defined Benefit**," final salary schemes..... I cannot wait to see how this is quantified!!

We learned that free schools are oversubscribed but 50 per cent of these new free schools due to open in the Autumn - do not have lease arrangements agreed. Worse still; The National Union of Teachers has accused the Government of wasting money on the free school "**vanity project**" after finding that £337m has been spent on academies and free schools in less than two years. To top it all off, teachers have called for a strike over the scrapping of their long summer break. **It's the children that I feel sorry for.**

Charity starts at home; or maybe it starts in the Treasury? Vince Cable and Jeremy Hunt have started vanguard action against the proposed changes to charity donations. It's very interesting too that the charity set up by Secretary of State Iain Duncan Smith – The Centre for Social Justice - came out and criticised the changes.

Research this week also revealed that the poorest families - earning less than £8,300 a year – have a 4.2 per cent rate inflation rate compared to an inflation rate of 3.3 per cent for households with an income of more than £71,000.

However it is not all bad, we have had good news this week; *the OECD has said that the UK was at a "potential turning point"* this is good news for providers and jobseekers alike.

Indeed, we are all in this together, but we are all in this together and at different rungs on the ladder; some are on the lower rung of the ladder with their heads slightly above the waterline; whilst those on the higher rungs may never get wet feet.

Have a great weekend.

Floyd

Opposition Position

With the London Mayor election less than three weeks away, Labour candidate Ken Livingstone launched his

[manifesto](#) on Wednesday this week. While *Ken's* focus is primarily transport and reducing the cost of living in London, yesMinister has pulled together all his employment, skills and training policies, please see below.

- **Return of EMA for Londoners** - One of Ken's headline policies is the return of Education Maintenance Allowance on a London wide basis. The allowance will provide up to £30 a week in support to young people to assist them in their studies. The money will be available to 16-19 year olds.
- **Pilot pre-apprenticeship courses** – The proposed pre-apprenticeship programme will support 1,000 young people to develop literary, numerical and personal skills required to successfully compete for an apprenticeship place.
- **Help to get working parents back to work** – Mr Livingstone will help unemployed parents return to work by assisting in child care provisions. Mr Livingstone outlines that he will offer low income families £700 to assist in child care provision.
- **Oppose rises in tuition fees.** Mr Livingstone will campaign against the Government policy of allowing universities to increase tuition fees.

Head line of the week

Metro, Pg.1, 13/04/2012

"Stampede" – Stamps rationed as people panic buy before price rise.