



Public affairs with a difference...

Welfare, Work, Economy, poverty, jobs

Britain's welfare system encourages cheats

Labour MP Frank Field, who has worked as poverty adviser for the Coalition, will warn that paying out based on need brings out the "worst side of human nature".

As we now have a welfare state based on meeting need, it will encourage individuals, not unreasonably, to try to ensure that they qualify under this guise. It therefore pays to lie about one's earnings, to cheat, or to be inactive," he will tell the Institute of Economic Affairs. "The worst side of human nature is encouraged, the best is penalised."

Mr Field will call for a salary-related unemployment insurance scheme that rewards those who contribute and a revision of eligibility rules for means-tested benefits. He will add that it is time for a "new contract with taxpayers".

Osborne's plans for workers to give up their employment rights

The Daily Telegraph

Vince Cable has claimed that George Osborne's plan for staff to surrender their employment rights in exchange for company shares will be shunned by most businesses.

In an article for the Liberal Democrat Voice website, Mr Cable sought to minimise the significance of the plan. "His proposed scheme, targeted at small companies, is entirely voluntary and cannot be forced upon employees," Mr Cable said. "There are some fast-growing businesses that may be attracted to the idea of a voluntary scheme which rewards employee ownership and provides opportunities for sharing capital gains, but it is not something intended for most ordinary businesses around the country."

Harassment laws to be eased

The Daily Telegraph

Under coalition plans, workers will no longer be able to take legal action against their employers if they are sexually or racially harassed at work by customers or clients.

Vince Cable, the Business Secretary, proposed a scheme to remove "third party" liability in cases where employees suffer abuse at work.

Chuka Umunna, the shadow business secretary, attacked the plan, warning that it would "water down protections for employees" against suffering abuse at work.

He said Adrian Beecroft, whose controversial review of employment law for the Government proposed the changes, had based his recommendations "on conversations with people". The Government denied that the plans would dilute protection for employees.

Civil servants using private email addresses

The Daily Telegraph

The use of personal emails by civil servants to discuss government business is to be investigated by the head of the Civil Service over fears they may be trying to avoid Freedom of Information Act requests.

Sir Bob Kerslake's office will examine a recent employment tribunal, which appears to show civil servants from the Department for Business using private email accounts provided by Hotmail and Yahoo! to conduct business.

The emails detail negotiations between officials and staff at Nominet, the Oxford-based non-profit company that runs the database of web addresses ending in ".uk".

Sir Bob's office said this week that an investigation would be mounted by the Cabinet Office's propriety and ethics team.

Voluntary work to form part of A-Level

The Daily Telegraph, The Times

Pupils could be required to undertake large-scale projects on top of conventional subjects under plans being introduced to ensure students are properly prepared for the demands of university.

The move is being considered as part of a proposal to create a new "Advanced Baccalaureate" for sixth-formers.

Last night, Government sources insisted the reforms would not lead to the abolition of A-levels but admitted the so-called "ABacc" could be added to official league tables. The baccalaureate may also be awarded to pupils as a college leaving certificate

Record numbers rely on food banks to survive

The Daily Telegraph

The Trussell Trust, which runs 270 food banks, said its network had fed almost 110,000 people since April, compared with 128,697 people during 2011-12.

The trust, which provides three days' worth of emergency food to people who are at crisis point, is on course to feed 200,000 in 2012-13.

The figures were released on the same day that it was revealed that consumer prices index (CPI) inflation hit its lowest level in nearly three years in September. Experts predict that rising energy, food and petrol costs will send inflation back up.

A trust spokesman said: "Further rises in food and fuel bills could see even more people in crisis turn to food banks."

Benefit fraudsters caught cheating

The Daily Telegraph

The number of people convicted for benefit fraud has risen by more than 40 per cent over the past few years.

Figures from the Department for Work and Pensions show that almost 10,000 benefit cheats were convicted during the last financial year, compared with 7,040 convictions during the same period in 2009-10. The rise comes as Government officials said improved convictions rates had been made following a range of new measures to gather evidence.

66 job seekers per vacancy

The Daily Telegraph

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found as many as 66 unemployed people are applying for each retail job. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, studied 650 advertised jobs also found that vacancies were sometimes closed within hours.

A quarter of income goes on childcare

The Daily Telegraph

IPPR has found that parents are spending more than a quarter of their income on child care. Fees rose by £280 in the past year. The average annual bill for caring for a child under the age of two is now £5,100. This means that a typical couple with two young children will spend 27 per cent of their income on child care, the Institute for Public Policy Research said.

IPPR has called for an extra £4 billion a year of taxpayers' money to be spent on subsidising child care bills to protect parents from the rapidly rising costs. More than one million women are deterred from returning to work by high child care costs, it claimed.

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