

# Rachel Reeves MP

## Monthly Report January 2015

Labour Member of Parliament for Leeds West, Shadow Secretary of State for Work & Pensions

### HAWKSWORTH POST OFFICE: LATEST NEWS



Hawksworth Wood Post Office, which closed for a year in 2010, is once again under threat.

The Post Office plans to move the service away from the heart of the estate. The plans depend

on improvements to a store on the other side of the estate, away from key bus routes and difficult to access from much of the area.

Just two years after the branch was saved following a concerted campaign, Rachel is once again campaigning to make sure that the service is right for the area.

She said:

“My number one priority is to make sure there is a Post Office in Hawksworth. Local people need to be listened to, and have

their views about the future of the Post Office taken into account.

We have stopped their closure plans before, and I will not allow the Post Office to run roughshod over the local community again.”

Rachel has surveyed local residents and raised the issue with senior Post Office officials, searching for a solution that works for the local community, not just Post Office managers.

### ***THEBIGWORD*** IN PARLIAMENT

Rachel was pleased to welcome local company *thebigword* to Parliament on 14th January. Based in Farnley, *thebigword* is a local firm that provides translation and technology services across the world. The company brought some of its latest apprentices to meet MPs.

Nearly 20 MPs turned out from across the country to meet the latest in a line of over 100 apprentices to have been enrolled in their successful apprenticeship programme. Rachel was pleased to meet the new apprentices and discuss how to increase the number of apprenticeships over the coming years.

A Labour Government will increase the number of apprenticeships, ensuring all firms that bid



for major government procurement contracts to provide new apprenticeship opportunities for the next generation.



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## HELP RACHEL GET RE-ELECTED IN LEEDS WEST

There is much to do in Leeds West. We will be out speaking to voters across the constituency about all the work Rachel has done since 2010, from saving Bramley Baths and protecting local libraries, to helping thousands of constituents with problems, many made worse by this Government.

We will also be working hard to re-elect John Illingworth in Kirkstall and Jim McKenna in Armley, and make sure that Julie Heslewood is elected to serve Bramley, and John Hardy in Farnley and Wortley. There is something for everyone to help with, and campaigning sessions every week between now and the election. Contact Jayne on 07764196120.

## HELP JAMIE HANLEY WIN PUDSEY FOR LABOUR

There are just over 100 days until the General Election. For many people, it can't come soon enough. The polls are tight, especially in our neighbouring key seat, Pudsey. Every leaflet delivered, voter registered and contact made will help deliver a Labour Government in May. Our candidate in Pudsey, Jamie Hanley, will need support if he is going to oust his Tory opponent. There are campaigning sessions every weekend in all four wards - you can find out more by contacting Charlotte Walker on [charlotte\\_walker@labour.org.uk](mailto:charlotte_walker@labour.org.uk).



## RACHEL VISITS LAWNS PARK AND GREENHILL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

In December, Rachel visited two local Primary schools to present prizes to the winners of her Christmas card competition.

At Lawns Park primary school, Rachel joined in with their final Assembly of the term and presented Archie with a small prize to congratulate him on winning her Christmas card competition. Rachel also handed out certificates to all of the pupils who had designed cards. Then it was on to Greenhill Primary School where she went to George's class to congratulate him on being the competition runner up.

Rachel said: "So many pupils from schools across Leeds West submitted designs for my competition, I would like to thank every one of them for taking part"



## Appendix I

### 11th January 2015: Birmingham Post

Rachel Reeves: More firms must pay living wage

More employers have to sign up to the Living Wage to help large numbers of families out of breadline existences, shadow minister Rachel Reeves has claimed.

Ms Reeves, Labour minister for work and pensions, said the current Living Wage of £7.85 an hour had so far attracted a total of 1,109 UK employers. But more organisations needed to subscribe to keep households above the poverty line.

In a visit to Birmingham's Unity Trust Bank, the first bank in the UK to sign up to the Living Wage, Ms Reeves said: "Most of us take it for granted but for a lot of people on low pay money is so, so tight.

"The Unity Trust Bank is the first bank in the UK to be accredited a Living Wage employer. We now need more employers to sign up to be Living Wage employers.

"There are many, many people in the UK working incredibly hard, sometimes getting up at 4am in the morning to be able to do two or three jobs to help support themselves and their families.

"We have also seen local authorities such as Birmingham City Council accredited Living Wage employers, putting money back into the British economy. If we get elected in May, we will encourage more firms to become Living Wage employers.

"We are saying that if you move your staff from the Minimum Wage to the Living Wage, we would share the costs with the employers. The number of employers accredited to the Living Wage is not huge, it is 1,109 and we want to increase that."

Peter Kelly, business development and marketing director at the Unity Trust Bank, said: "We became the first bank to be accredited Living Wage in April 2013, and almost all the banks in the UK have followed our lead now.

"What is important is to find ways to encourage more organisations to sign up to the Living Wage. It gives people a decent wage, the minimum wage does not allow people to have a decent standard of living. For us, it is very important, it resonates well with our customers, with our staff and with the trade unions."

Meanwhile, on forthcoming Pensions Freedom for over-55s to be introduced in April, Ms Reeves said: "For some people, taking the money as cash could be the right thing, although you could end up with a big tax bill.

"We need to ensure that people get the advice and information they need rather than being ripped off by scams."

## Appendix II

### 8th January 2015: Labour List

#### Older workers

Later today we will be meeting older workers in West London to listen to the challenges they've faced in finding a job. Despite the skills and experience they bring far too many older workers are finding it impossible to get a job. And last month we learnt nearly 45,000 people who are over 50 have been unemployed for over two years. Not two weeks, not two months, but two long years without a job.

To David Cameron and George Osborne that's a fact of life. But to Labour that represents a huge waste of talent, potential and money. It's another example of Tory Welfare Waste.

Older workers get little or no support from David Cameron and Nick Clegg's government.

Their flagship Work Programme isn't working. Just 13 per cent of people aged 55 to 59 and only seven per cent of people aged over 60 have found a lasting job through the Work Programme. On any measure the Work Programme is a complete failure.

Thousands of older self-employed workers struggle to save for a pension. And 600,000 self-employed workers face a huge and completely unnecessary increase in red tape as a result of new Universal Credit rules.

In Government, Labour introduced the New Deal for Over 50s, a voluntary scheme which gave extra help to people seeking employment who considered their age could be a disadvantage. Participants were assigned a personal adviser. But today, there is no specialist help.

It's time for a new approach to get older people into the workplace, rather than abandoning them to years on the dole.

Today we are unveiling our five point plan designed to treat older workers with the dignity and respect they deserve. Labour will;

1. Introduce a Compulsory Jobs Guarantee to ensure older jobseekers who have been unemployed for over two years are guaranteed the offer of a paid job which they'd have to take or risk losing their benefits. New figures from the House of Commons library have shown 68,000 over 50s would benefit from Labour's Compulsory Jobs Guarantee in the first year of a Labour government.
2. Reform the failing Work Programme. Labour will devolve the Work Programme to make it more responsive to the needs of older people in different areas of the country.
3. Help more older workers save for a pension. With the latest figures showing less than a third of self-employed workers saving into a pension and with more workers going self-employed, Labour will act to ensure more older self-employed workers are able to save for a pension.
4. Cut red tape for older workers who are self-employed. New Universal Credit rules threaten 600,000 self-employed workers with a huge increase in red tape. Labour is committed to cutting this unnecessary bureaucracy.
5. Introduce a higher rate of Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) to those who have contributed over years. This would be fully funded by extending the length of time people need to have worked to qualify.

These bold measures will make a real difference to thousands of older people. We can't afford not to act. Long-term unemployment comes at a huge cost for older workers, a huge cost for their families and a huge cost for taxpayers. It's more Tory Welfare Waste that Britain can't afford.

The challenges are clear: the UK has an ageing population; thousands of older people out of work and lamentably bad back to work provision that is not meeting the needs of older people. We need a serious strategy that values older workers, and delivers the means to keep them in work. Not least because the economy is clearly going to need their contribution, and can't afford the loss of their experience and expertise. This is an issue that will become critically important in the years ahead.

We will not abandon the over 50's to the tragic waste of long-term unemployment. Because we care passionately about tackling unemployment for young and old jobseekers we will take action to get people off benefits and into work. That's what One Nation Labour means. A country where no-one is left behind.

Rachel Reeves is Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Rt Hon Stephen Timms is the Shadow Minister for Employment.

## Appendix III

17th December 2014: Mumsnet

### Bedroom Tax

Have you ever heard of the 'housing benefit social sector size criteria'? You're not alone if you haven't. But if you were asked what is the name for the government's decision to force half a million families to pay a tax on their bedrooms most people would say the 'Bedroom Tax'.

Last month I travelled to Pembrokeshire to meet Paul, Sue and Warren who were one of thousands of families hit by the Bedroom Tax. Paul and Sue look after their grandson Warren who suffers from Potokoi-Shaffer Syndrome, a very rare genetic disorder. Their home has been specially adapted to meet Warren's needs. Paul and Sue share one room, Warren sleeps in another and the third room is needed for carers to stay overnight and to store equipment for Warren's condition, Without the help of overnight carer workers Warren would have to be put into residential care, at substantial extra cost to his local authority and to taxpayers.

We should be celebrating and applauding the incredible contribution Paul and Sue are making to Warren's life and to our country. But instead, this government, has deducted £60 a month from their Housing Benefit because they live in a bungalow with three bedrooms, one of which has been deemed a spare bedroom, chargeable under the Bedroom Tax.

When I met Sue and Paul it was impossible not to recognise their love for Warren and the incredible care they provide for him around the clock to make sure he gets the best start in life. Like thousands of families across the country they are doing the right thing, working hard and but finding a government taking money out of their pockets making it harder for them to get by.

The Bedroom Tax is the very last thing families like the Rutherford's need. On average it has cost families over £1,200 since it was brought in by the government last April 2013. Around half a million people are being forced to pay the Bedroom Tax, paying on average £14 a week. Two thirds of those hit are disabled. 60,000 are carers. And two fifths of the households affected have children living in them, which could mean more than 300,000 children.

Ed Miliband and I have pledged that the next Labour Government will repeal the Bedroom Tax. But families like the Rutherfords and thousands like them can't afford to wait until the next election.

That's why we have forced a debate and a vote in the House of Commons today (Wednesday 17 December) on the Bedroom Tax. If enough MPs vote with Labour the Bedroom Tax will be effectively abolished by Christmas.

Few people outside of Downing Street and the Department for Work and Pensions defend the Bedroom Tax. Even the government's own independent report into the Bedroom Tax found a series of failings in the policy. Less than five per cent of people affected by the Bedroom Tax had moved to another smaller home in the social rented sector. It also found that over 60 per cent of people had fallen behind with their rent. And despite the government promising the Bedroom Tax would save money, the amount of money spent on housing benefit is rising, not falling. All in all the Bedroom Tax is another example of Tory Welfare Waste.

With a week before Christmas I hope MPs think carefully about the impossible choices that thousands of families are facing right now. Heating or eating. Paying the rent or paying the bills. Mums and Dads who want the best for their children, but are struggling to make ends meet as the cost-of-living.

I have a simple belief that government is there to help people to fulfil their dreams and realise their potential. But too often government holds people back and is making them worse, not better off.

So it doesn't matter whether it's called the Bedroom Tax or the 'housing benefit social sector size criteria', this cruel tax is making life harder, not easier for thousands of people. With Christmas just a week away it's time for this nasty tax on thousands of children and families to go once and for all.

Rachel Reeves MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions