

issue 7



SPRING 2025 EDITION **SOLIDARITY**



'A Voice From the Frontline'

by Colin Hampton

The Government's announcements of changes to Personal Independence Payment and Pathways to Work in the spring statement will lead to the further impoverishment of people who have health conditions and those who are disabled. The cuts, which aim to save £5 billion, will be made at the expense of those who are already facing grave difficulties with the rising prices of utilities and food in the shops on top of the costs associated with their health condition.

The Chancellor, like all Chancellors for the last 30 years pledges that this is all part of a policy to move people closer to the labour market and into a job.

BUT WAIT A MINUTE!

Isn't that what the last government said and the one before that, and the one before that - going back to before the turn of the century?

YES, IT IS!

And each time, the research both independent and that conducted by the DWP shows that the cutting and denial of benefits does not have the effect of enabling work progression to those suffering physical and mental health conditions and those who are disabled.



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WHY IS THIS YOU MAY ASK?



Put simply, all governments over the last 40 years or more, of all political colours, have introduced supply-side policies (in the language of economics). In other words, they focus on the help provided by work coaches, cognitive therapy, job clubs, using sanctions for those not engaging with the job centre's initiatives, as well as the call for people to get off their backsides and out of their sick bed and go get a job!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT YOU ASK!

All the supply-side policies, assume that there is an abundance of employers chomping at the bit to take into employment, people with health conditions and those who are disabled.

WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE FOR THIS?

There isn't any! For many people with little or no skills or only skills from older industries, it is our experience that there is little or no appetite to employ this cohort. Someone who's CV shows periods out of work with mental health problems will ring alarm bells when reading application forms or when at interviews. How many employees want to take on someone who regularly has to attend hospital or doctor's appointments for their health condition? A simple piece of research will bring this to the attention of a government that wanted to match demand policies with those on the supply side.



BUT DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH!

One of the only initiatives that recognise the problems of disabled people was the Remploy scheme established in 1949, after the Second World War. Between 2009, and 2014, it found 100,000 jobs for disabled people in supported businesses and allowed public bodies to fulfil their corporate social responsibility objectives purchasing from them. The coalition Government shut the factories! Two years after the closure of the Remploy sites a Parliamentary answer revealed only half the people made redundant had found employment. It is unclear how many were able to sustain their jobs in the medium to long-term. At the same time, DUWC conducted a piece of research following the prospects of people who had been found fit for work, a decision they had challenged but had lost at tribunal and their sickness benefits denied. Out of the 50 people we followed up, only four found work and only two managed to sustain it. The rest were impoverished either surviving on their partners income, using up any savings or making a new claim further down the line.

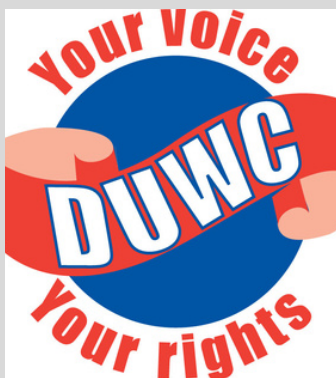
SO THIS IS NOT ABOUT WORK BUT A BENEFIT CUT!

On the doorstep, in elections, canvassers find a public who think the benefit system is abused. Since the 1980s, the value of unemployment benefits has been massively eroded. From unemployment benefit to Job Seekers Allowance to Universal Credit, the money paid to a person becoming unemployed and presenting themselves as fit for work has been systematically cut by all governments. The Unemployed Workers' Centres have waged many campaigns over the last 40 years on this issue. We have taken the case to Ministers who have looked at us incredulous that they might fly in the face of public opinion and raise the level of unemployment benefit. Over time, the value of these benefits is far lower than those claimed when claiming due to sickness and ill health. No rational person, if viewing their employment prospects as limited or unlikely in the short to medium term would present themselves as fit for work. So this is a massive failure of Government policy over decades – so they shift the blame on to the victims.

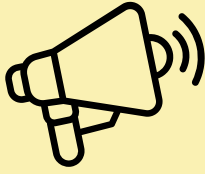


Countries that have higher unemployment benefits have far better results in people getting back in to work. If the policy was about getting people into work, the government would substantially increase benefits for those presenting as fit for work, institute Job Guarantee schemes, and work to change the underlying reason for widespread physical and mental health problems in our society. Every Public Health professional will tell you what it is – *poverty and inequality*. Ironically, the government attacks benefits under the guise of saving money, when all should know that the reverse is true. It is short term thinking and is systematic of a political system that is struggling to find answers to long term problems.

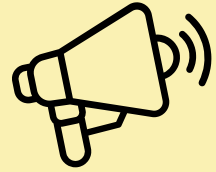
VIEW FROM COLIN HAMPTON
CO ORDINATOR FOR THE DERBYSHIRE UNEMPLOYED WORKERS
CENTRE



DAY OF ACTION 1ST



APRIL



**Chesterfield Unite
Community and Derbyshire
Unemployed Workers'
Centres (DUWC) took part in
a national day of action to
end fuel poverty and take
energy back into public
ownership.**

**The tug of war in New
Square event pitted energy
companies against members
of the public. Watch the
video on our facebook page
to find out who wins!**



#TAKE THE POWER BACK

The day of action was to raise the awareness of the private companies pocketing billions of pounds in profit, while members of the public, including a student, OAP, voluntary sector, unemployed and family on low income see nothing but costs of energy going up. From the 1st April to 30th June the price for energy for a typical household who use electricity and gas and pay by direct debit will go up by 6% to £1,849 per year

The demonstration was to raise awareness and make the call for more people to join Unite Community to fight for a change and get involved with more campaigns.



Have you received your letter to migrate over to Universal Credit?

You have three months from getting your letter to claim



1. Apply on-line

This is the default for Universal Credit – both creating an account, making a claim and then managing the account over the months and years ahead.

Claimants will need:-

- a mobile phone (which can receive text messages)
- an e-mail address
- their bank account details

2. Apply by phone 0800 328 5644

Claimants who are unable to go on-line , due to disability can make a telephone claim. They will need:

Details of -housing rental costs

- child dependants
- disabled child dependants
- childcare costs
- Carer's Element
- If already gained, adding Limited Capability for Work & Work Related Activity {LCWRA} status

It is also essential to report any capital and savings over £6000

East Midlands Asbestos Support Team

helping victims of asbestos-related diseases and their families. Formerly known as DAST.



EMAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

EMAST held it's AGM in March 2025 at Market Harborough and an enjoyable and interesting day was had by the attendees.

EMAST changed it's name in October 2024 from Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team to better reflect the area EMAST helps with advice about benefits for asbestos related illnesses and support groups for those affected by asbestos.

Over 50 people attended the AGM and heard reports from the EMAST staff and the trustees on the valuable services provided during 2024. The AGM was also updated on the continuing campaigns to remove asbestos from workplaces and public buildings and for Altrad, the holding company of Cape, to contribute £10 million to mesothelioma research, which the Parliamentary APPG on asbestos issues is expected to report on soon.

The meeting concluded with an excellent lunch and raffle sending everyone off in good spirits.

Thanks to all those who have supported EMAST during 2024.
For information about the services EMAST provides, please contact:
coordinator@emast.org.uk or tel 01246 380415

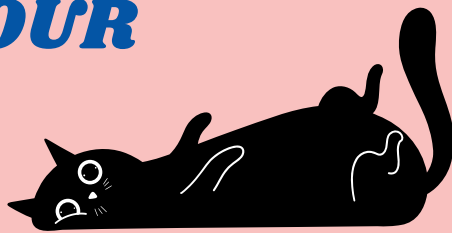


It is with great sadness that I have to let you know that Karen Seymour, our much loved friend and colleague at the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres has died after a short illness. Karen was a committed socialist and valued member of our team. Many people have been supported by Karen over the many years she has given as a volunteer and a member of staff at DUWC. Our loss cannot be put into words.

We will share the details of her funeral when we are made aware



***KAREN
SEYMOUR***



Best wishes to Steph....



Stephanie Nunes from Sheffield Hallam joined us in January 2025 for a 13 week placement. She is studying Criminology and Psychology and came to volunteer at the centre 2 days a week. She has been such a bonus for our team and her knowledge and skills have been invaluable. All the best for the future!



Get in touch to find out about our great volunteering opportunities

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We cover outreaches in.....



**Alfreton
Belper
Bolsover
Creswell
Brimington
Chesterfield
Shirebrook
Clowne
Eckington
Grassmoor
Clay Cross
Hasland
Heanor
North Wingfield
Pinxton
Somercotes
Staveley
New Houghton**



**For a full list of our
opening times,
please visit our
website
at:**

**duwc.org.uk/nearest
office**

**or call us on 01246
231441**

**WE ARE CLOSED 5TH MAY
AND 26TH AND 27TH MAY**

