

1. Proposed by Cllr Peter Dean
Seconded by Cllr Abdul Jabbar

Unclaimed benefits in Oldham

This council recognises the impact of unclaimed income related benefits has on the quality of live of our most vulnerable residents and on the local economy.

Estimate range from £26million to £44million pounds goes unclaimed by Oldham residents for benefits they are legitimately entitled to.

This council recognises the role it has as a community leader and administer of some benefits and recognises the role of other public sector bodies and government departments in ensuring benefit take up is maximised.

Whilst there are a number of reasons why some benefits go under claimed it is safe to conclude that the promotion of entitlement and older people feeling in order to remove the perceived stigma some may have with claiming benefits. They should not claim are contributing factors in some cases.

This council therefore resolves

1. To support the Royal British Legion campaign 'Return to Rationing' which aims to rename Council Tax Benefit to Council Tax Rebate and instruct the Chief Executive to write to RBL to confirm this council's support.
2. Write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and to the Local Government Minister to outline this council's support for the campaign and to outline our concern and current actions being taken locally.
3. Notwithstanding the support mentioned above, this council will ensure all literature is clearly worded and designed to be easy to understand.
4. With it's partners to build on work already underway to increase benefit take up to include greater promotion and the introduction of a clear benefits calculator, or link to a benefits calculator for all income related benefits on the councils website.
5. That a targeted take up campaign be prepared by officers of this council along with an ongoing strategy of maximising benefit take up in the Borough.

These to be presented to the Cabinet before February 2010.

2. MOVED by Councillor Mark Alcock and SECONDED BY Councillor Valerie Sedgwick

This Council: -

- (a) Notes the excellent work of the Royal British Legion in campaigning on behalf of our Armed Forces.
- (b) welcomes and supports the principles of the Legion Manifesto which are set out below :-

1. Service Personnel and their Families

- Keep the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme under continual, independent review and:
 - (i) change the standard of proof so that where evidence is inconclusive, the benefit of the doubt is given to the injured Service person;
 - (ii) remove the link between lump-sum awards and ongoing payments to reflect the fact that they are paid for different reasons; allow claims relating to injuries or illnesses caused by medical treatment;
 - (iii) remove the time limits to lodge a claim; and exempt payments when carrying out means-testing for State benefits.
- Stop breaches of harmony guidelines (deployment rates) in order to reduce family separation and breakdown.
- Bring all single and family accommodation up to the highest standard within the lifetime of the next parliament and ensure that the Ministry of Defence publishes full details of the funding and timescales needed to upgrade Armed Forces housing.
- Introduce health screening and monitoring for Service personnel and vulnerable dependants and ensure priority is given to those deployed for extended periods, their partners and those medically downgraded.
- Introduce more effective prevention and treatment strategies to tackle mental health problems, binge drinking and drug abuse.
- Assess the impact of mobility on Armed Forces families, especially in relation to health, employment and education
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2. Bereaved Armed Forces Families

- Fund an independent legal advice service to provide bereaved Armed Forces families with support and guidance through the inquest process.
- Introduce an Independent Advisory Committee on Military Deaths to provide advice, review recommendations from coroners and to give families a voice.
- Introduce mandatory training in Armed Forces policies and procedures to better equip coroners to investigate operational or training related Armed Forces deaths.

- Give the Service Complaints Commissioner additional powers to investigate complaints made by bereaved Armed Forces families.
- Create specialist bereavement counselling services for Armed Forces families, including parents and children.

3. Veterans and their Families

- Make the NHS priority treatment system work for veterans with injuries caused by Service in the Armed Forces or consider privately funded alternatives.
- Tackle poverty among veterans and their families by increasing incomes through:
 - (i) doubling the Personal Expenses Allowance for those receiving residential care;
 - (ii) making the disregarding of all War Pension payments for means-testing for Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit a statutory requirement; and
 - (iii) developing an automated payment system for Council Tax Benefit.
- Ensure that local authorities meet their obligations to provide Disabled Facilities Grants to veterans who need adaptations to their homes.
- Exempt all veterans who require a Disabled Facilities Grant from the current means test if the adaptation is needed because of a Service related injury.
- Fund comprehensive research and provide additional compensation for duty of care breaches to veterans suffering from legacy health issues, including Gulf War and nuclear test veterans.
- Provide all Service leavers with an effective mental health education programme at the point of resettlement, so those at high risk know where to go for help.

This Council therefore resolves to:-

- (a) Request the Chief Executive to write to the Royal British Legion to express the Councils support for the Legion Manifesto Campaign.
- (b) write to the Secretary of State for Defence and local MPs to urge support for the Legion Manifesto
- (c) request that all Council members work within their own political parties to further the aims of The Legion Manifesto.

3. MOVED by Councillor John Dillon and SECONDED BY Councillor Rod Blyth

This Council: -

- (a) Welcomes the valuable and often unsung service provided by the Oldham Mountain Rescue Service

(b) also notes that the Oldham Mountain Rescue Service, despite being a voluntary organisation and a registered charity, are liable for VAT on equipment purchases

This Council resolves to:-

(d) congratulate the Oldham Mountain Rescue Service on their continuing excellent work

(e) Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and local MPs to urge support for Oldham Mountain Rescue Service and, other Mountain Rescue Teams nationwide, to be granted zero VAT status.