



# News from Westminster

11<sup>th</sup> January 2007 Christine Russell MP

## Labour's crackdown on rogue employers

### Join my campaign to stop unscrupulous employers breaking the minimum wage law

Workers have the right to a decent minimum wage and I am determined that they get it. To those employers avoiding the minimum wage the message is clear: don't pay it and you'll pay the penalty.

I've spent almost 10 years in Parliament campaigning for a Labour Government to bring in a minimum wage and keep on increasing it up to £5.35 an hour – helping **170,000 people in the North West** I've no intention of letting anyone get away with paying illegally low wages in **Chester**.

With new powers announced this week, employers that refuse to pay up can end up with a criminal record and a £5,000 fine.

Labour's National Minimum Wage has

already made a significant difference – lifting families out of poverty by making work pay.

Before the National Minimum Wage was introduced, wages of as little as £1.20 per hour were common and legal.

Against the predictions of the Tories, Labour has delivered a rising minimum wage at the same time as achieving the highest employment level ever, with 2.4 million more people in work than in 1997 and unemployment close to its lowest for around 30 years.

If you know someone who isn't getting what they're owed, make sure they get in touch with me on **02072196398**.

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## An end to covert selection in schools

On Monday the Government laid before Parliament new rules on school admissions in England which will mean that **all children, regardless of their background, have a fair opportunity of gaining a place at the school they want to attend.**

The strengthened Code is great news as it puts an end to covert selection in schools, by outlawing a range of unfair admission practices in all maintained schools, including selective and comprehensive schools, Academies, faith schools and state boarding schools.

The new Code, which comes into force in February for admissions from the 2008 school year, builds on the ban on school admission interviews for parents or children imposed by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

If you want to have a look at it, the new Code is online at [www.dfes.gov.uk/sacode](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sacode)

# 800,000 workers in North West set to benefit from extra holiday entitlement

People work hard and they deserve a decent break. I want to make sure everyone gets the holiday they are entitled to.

Under new proposals published by the Government today, 800,000 workers in the North West will benefit from increased workers' holiday entitlement from 20 days per year to 28. This is a 21% of the North West's overall workforce.

New research has shown that up to six million workers in the Great Britain would benefit from an extra eight days holiday each year under the plans.

These proposals will ensure the 800,000 workers in

the North West, particularly some of our most vulnerable workers, will no longer be discriminated against when it comes to holidays.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is launching a second public consultation on the implementation of the changes. To have your say go to [www.dti.gov.uk/employment/holidays/index.html](http://www.dti.gov.uk/employment/holidays/index.html)

Statutory annual leave entitlement would be increased in two stages, rising from 20 to 24 days on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 (pro rata for part-timers), and from 24 to 28 days on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008.

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## RESIDENTS GROUPS GET MORE POWER TO TACKLE ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Resident groups on council estates in England are to be given new powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.

New regulations laid before Parliament on Tuesday will for the first time give Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) powers to apply for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

Powers of this kind are at the heart of the Government's Respect Action plan. I believe we should give people power and a real sense of ownership over their services and public spaces. So this is just the kind of thing I want to see happen in Chester.

I was pleased that the Government reassured MPs that there will be safeguards to ensure the new powers are used responsibly - that is sensible.

So if a TMO in Chester is competent, they will get the powers to take on anti-social behaviour.

## TOP CLASS RESULTS FOR PUPILS IN OUR AREA

New figures show Chester pupils are getting great - and improving results - year on year.

The new information released today shows an increase of 13.4% in the number of pupils getting 5 good GCSEs since 1997.

These results mean that Chester pupils are leaving school increasingly well-prepared for the world after school.

The improvement since 1997 is particularly impressive and shows what can be done when a Labour Government makes education its number one priority. It's vital for the future of Chester and the country that we continue to put the education of our children above everything else.

The latest Tory plans to cut taxes by £21 billion would devastate investment in schools and unravel the progress we have made since 1997.