



UNISON Response to the 2014 Budget

The Coalition's fifth budget was presented as one for the entire country. It was, the Chancellor said, "a Budget for building a resilient economy... part of a long term economic plan - a plan that is delivering security for the people of this country." With more optimistic predictions made by the Office for Budgetary Responsibility this was the best economic backdrop to a Coalition Budget and the programme of austerity meant that by 2018/19 the Government would even run a budget surplus.

Unfortunately the Chancellor's statement fell short of any ideas that would persuade people that the pain of this continuing austerity was worth it. With 60% of the cuts promised by the Coalition still to come, incomes being squeezed and prices rising faster than wages, the claim that austerity has worked feels wrong to UNISON members.

There are still four more years left in the planned programme of austerity but the 2014 Budget does little for public services or the public service workers who deliver them. The Chancellor again rejected calls to lift the restraint on public sector pay, which will continue until 2016 under Coalition plans and which has seen public service worker pay frozen and its value cut by between 10% and 18% since 2010. Meanwhile hundreds of thousands of other public service workers are worried about the security of their jobs, knowing that cuts in public spending mean they're roles are under threat.

Overall the Budget was a pre-election gimmick, small-scale tinkering (like the "big" announcement of 1p off a pint of beer) targeted at a few specific groups rather than interventions to help the many millions of hardworking individuals struggling with a cost of living crisis.

There was no action to tackle the ever increasing fuel, transport and housing costs; no direct action to secure jobs and growth in the economy; nothing for young people struggling to find work; nothing to address the level of increasingly unaffordable housing across the country; and nothing for those struggling on wages that increase at a slower rate than prices do.

Ultimately, the Chancellor failed to listen to the collective voice of millions of people across the country that don't care what shape the new £1 coin is – as long as they see more of them in their pay packets.