

# *Benefits*

## **THE ROLE OF THE BENEFITS SERVICE WITHIN LOCAL STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF WORKLESSNESS**

### **ONE DAY CONFERENCE**

**Friday 11th December 2009**

**Local Government House, Smith Square, Westminster SW1**

A recent Audit Commission report, "When it Comes to the Crunch" examined the preparedness and response of local authorities to serious and long-lasting recession. The report emphasises the central role of local authorities in assisting communities through proactive benefits management, job creation and business support.

The local authority benefits section should be central to any strategic planning on initiatives to reduce joblessness including a pro-active approach to expected increases in worklessness, together with a joined-up strategy for supporting the community during recession.

This one day conference is designed to provide an examination of the expectations of both central government and the Audit Commission of the role of local authorities benefits services as well as to explore the ways that the service can be prepared and proactive for a new role that is central to the authorities' overall worklessness strategy.

The conference will provide an insight into the dynamics of worklessness and the accompanying new claimant profile, innovative planning to join benefits with other key services assisting the community and good practice examples of pro-active benefits management.

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## WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- Treasurers
- Revenue Managers
- Benefit Managers
- Heads of Regeneration and Worklessness Planning
- Portfolio Holders for Regeneration

## REGISTRATION

### **Online**

You can register for this conference online at [www.psstrategies.co.uk](http://www.psstrategies.co.uk)

### **Fax / Post**

Please complete the enclosed booking form and fax, email or post it to the address shown on the form.

Further booking forms are available from the conference administration team on 01483 203536 or by emailing [info@benedictbr.co.uk](mailto:info@benedictbr.co.uk)

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## SPEAKERS INCLUDE

- Tim Savill, National Lead Benefits  
The Audit Commission
- Kate Green, Chief Executive  
Child Poverty Action Group
- Stephen Jackson, Regeneration Manager  
Amber Valley Borough Council
- Malcolm Gardner  
The Counter-Fraud Group
- Paul Sissons  
Institute for Employment Studies, Sussex University

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## MORNING PROGRAMME

### The Framework

10.30 **Key note address: The Audit Commission Report**

Tim Savill, National Lead Benefits, the Audit Commission

The recent Audit Commission report, "When it Comes to the Crunch", examined the preparedness and response of local authorities to the recession. This keynote address will provide an overview of the report as well as a view from the Audit Commission on the current preparedness of authorities, the role it sees local authorities playing in supporting communities through an economic downturn and its expectations of the role of the benefits section within this.

11.30 **The LGA View – The Role of the Local Authority as the Key Agency in Worklessness Planning**

The Local Government Association (LGA) - speaker to be confirmed

This presentation from the Local Government Association will provide a local government view of the current work being undertaken by local authorities in pro-active strategies to combat worklessness. It will focus particularly on the benefits service and the various different services that need to join up to provide a comprehensive forward thinking policy.

12.00 **Panel Discussion and Questions – The Objectives for Assessment**

Panel members:

Tim Savill, National Lead Benefits, the Audit Commission

The Local Government Association (LGA)

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## MORNING PROGRAMME

### Strategic Planning

#### 12.15 **Strategic Links in the Local Area**

Stephen Jackson, Regeneration Manager, Amber Valley Borough Council

This presentation will provide a view from an authority considered by the Audit Commission to be showing good practice in the Council leading local regeneration, community involvement and strategic planning on worklessness. The presentation will examine the partnership working and strategic planning processes.

#### 12.40 **Pro-active Benefits Management**

Malcolm Gardner, the Counter-Fraud Group

This presentation will place the benefits section firmly within the framework outlined by the introductory speakers. It will look at the role of the benefits section as the first point of contact for those struggling in the recession, the links the benefits section should be making with other assisting agencies and strategic planning for this central role. Key themes will be:

- Developing interactive links with other benefits and concessions
- Strategic development of authority-wide goals
- Links with housing - can the delivery of benefits become part of the strategic drive to reduce homelessness?
- Leadership and ownership

#### 1.05 **Panel Discussion and Questions**

Panel members:

Malcolm Gardner, the Counter-Fraud Group

Stephen Jackson, Regeneration Manager, Amber Valley Borough Council

#### 1.15 **Lunch and Networking**

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## AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

### Developing a Customer-Focused Response

2.00 **Understanding the Impact of the Recession on Benefit Claims**

Paul Sissons, Institute for Employment Studies, Sussex University

This presentation will provide an understanding of the likely demographic of benefit claims. It will provide authorities with the expected impact on benefit claims as the recession develops and look at time lags, projected claimant numbers and the service requirements to meet these changes.

2.30 **Providing a Planned Customer Service for the New Workless**

To be confirmed

This session will look at the benefits section role as the first point of call for many hit by the recession. It will look at how forward planning and strategic links within the authority can assist the customer and enhance the reputation of the authority for many who will be claiming for the first time.

3.00 **Panel Discussion and Questions**

Panel members:

Paul Sissons, Institute for Employment Studies, Sussex University

To be confirmed

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## AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

3.15 **Delivering Future Benefits: A view of the future for Welfare Benefits**

Kate Green, Chief Executive, Child Poverty Action Group

Whichever party wins the next election, one of the biggest issues will be how to make benefits work through assisting those in need whilst encouraging an active contribution to society. This address will focus on the future for welfare benefits following the next election and provide a vision for the next few years.

3.45 **Questions: Delivering Future Benefits**

Kate Green, Chief Executive, Child Poverty Action Group

3.50 **Chair's Conclusion and Summary**

4.00 **Conference Ends**

## **PSS**

**Public Sector Strategies** has been facilitating and producing conferences for the public sector since 1994, often in partnership with local government and central government agencies and departments. For a list of forthcoming events please visit [www.PSSstrategies.co.uk](http://www.PSSstrategies.co.uk)

## **Conference Objectives**

- To provide an examination of the expectations of both central government and the Audit Commission of the role of local authorities' benefits services following the recent Audit Commission report, "When it Comes to the Crunch"
- To focus on the role of the local authority benefits service within worklessness strategies
- To examine strategic links between the benefits section, the local authority and external bodies to meet worklessness objectives
- To look at good practice case studies of pro-active area planning and the role of benefits within overarching strategies
- To provide an insight into the dynamics of worklessness and the accompanying new claimant profile

## **Further Information**

For further information on this, or other Public Sector Strategy (PSS) conferences, please telephone PSS on **0118 933 2636**, email [info@PSSstrategies.co.uk](mailto:info@PSSstrategies.co.uk) or visit our website <http://www.psstrategies.co.uk>

For booking queries please contact Benedict Business Resources on 01483 203536.