

Unemployment still rises in Yorkshire and Humber

Despite the national fall in unemployment figures announced in January, for the three months ending November 2009, and again the fall announced in February for the three months ending December 2009, in Yorkshire and Humber the number of jobless actually rose. See:

http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/4861690.Unemployment_in_region_on_the_rise_despite_national_drop/

<http://www.itv.com/yorkshire/unemployment-up53225/>

Nationally there was a fall of 7,000 between September and November, but in Yorkshire and Humber there was the biggest percentage rise in unemployment of any region – there was a rise of 6.1% to 239,000, a rise of 14,000. In December there was a further rise in our region, despite another modest fall nationally, and the number is now 240,000. The rate of unemployment in Yorkshire and Humber now stands at 9.1%. (7.8% nationally)

Youth Unemployment

It was good news that nationally the number of young people who are unemployed also fell, down from 943,000 to 927,000, in November, and down again in December to 923,000. However, this still means that almost 20% of 16-24 year olds are unemployed.

Further, amongst black young people the rate of unemployment is much higher, the Institute for Public Policy Research announced on the same day as the first set of lower unemployment figures were released. Their research into young people showed that almost half the black people interviewed said that they were out of work (48%). See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8468308.stm>

Their research also showed that those with no qualifications were more likely to be unemployed – 43%.

Long-Term Unemployment

The worrying thing about this is the prospect of young people who become a generation who have never worked. The long-term effects of unemployment can be devastating; for young people particularly it could result in a generation who never work, who may suffer serious health problems due to despondency and depression, who may turn to crime and gangs, who are trapped in poverty.

The fall in unemployment nationally was fuelled partly by people taking part-time jobs. The number of *full-time* employed people fell – by 113,000 at the end of November. At the same time as unemployment fell nationally the number of long-

term unemployed actually rose nationally – by 29,000 to 631,000, at the end of November, and rose again in December to 663,000, the highest since 1997.

See BBC website –

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7789784.stm>

and

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8519647.stm>

Yorkshire and Humber has a dependence on manufacturing jobs who have been hard-hit in this recession. Unemployment is likely to continue to rise in our region.

What can churches do?

- Support the unemployed with pastoral care
- Encourage people to volunteer – doing regular tasks with colleagues can restore self-esteem and purpose, build confidence and skills.
- Pray for those out of work.
- Join a government scheme to help unemployed young people. The government announced in the budget the future jobs fund which is now open for bidding. It is to create jobs for young people 18-24 who have been out of work for a year. It will fund a six-month job at 25 hours a week on minimum wages, plus some supervision costs etc. They must be new jobs which will serve local communities. They are keen on partnership bids, and bids from or involving the third sector, which will create at least 30 jobs in a six-month period; the funding is from this October until March 2011. see <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/campaigns/futurejobsfund/index.asp> The Salvation Army are currently employing 900 young people through this scheme to work in their homelessness hostels.
- In this election year make sure that candidates at hustings are asked about policies for the unemployed.
- Challenge local councilors about how they are assisting the unemployed back into work. Each council has government money to spend to promote economic wellbeing and some have extra funding to tackle “worklessness”.
- Find out more about the issues behind unemployment – see the CRC paper on Unemployment and the Churches by David Price in May 2009, see <http://www.crc-online.org.uk/papers.asp?slid=86&mid=90>