

27 October 2023

Staffing in RSD

Chaos is business as usual in Retirement Services Directorate.

The recent members' bulletin by PCS on 14 September regarding DWP Retirement Services Directorate (RSD) moving work around and changing staff duties wasn't news to most RSD staff. RSD has been experiencing reassignments since late winter.

Service centres have had new staff change from one benefit to another while still in consolidation for their first ever role in the Department. At Makerfield, this involved moving staff handling New State Pension (nSP) to a variety of other flavours of pensions-related work.

At our site, dozens of people were just suddenly moved of *en masse* to something widely divergent from their contractually agreed department and placed under remote command.

"That's how we do it in DWP!" was one line frequently heard by staff of all grades. Staff grumbles about not being able to do the job they were recruited for were swept under the rug, and many felt like they were merely a number on a spreadsheet, to be moved at will to fit directives from on high.

Now another announcement comes of even more staff being pulled from RSD to fit "the needs of the business" but what about the needs of staff?

Recent nSP changes at one site not only saw a reduction of staff, but a change to work hours as G4S contracted staff start a new contract on their own. That was negotiated in the spring of 2023. Less staff, changed hours of work, restrictions now on how one can build flexi-time due to the hours change... that's how it's done, you know!

Workplace adjustments, family accommodations, working patterns, annual leave days... all now up in the air due to reduced and reassigned staff who *should* have been going back to Pensions, but now move onto the next hot project as "Ministerial priority" changes.

RSD is already severely understaffed in nSP. There are many people experiencing stress due to the call load and performance metrics that calls to union reps have almost doubled. Reps have provided guidance for complaints, grievances and OHS workplace accommodations walk-throughs. This isn't how you treat people, according to DWP Values. This is NOT the way.

When will DWP understand that its strength is in its people and that people are not a spreadsheet? When will DWP realise that the crisp autumn scent is not burning leaves, but burnt-out staff?

DWP group conference 2023 adopted policy that has armed the union's group leadership to challenge RSD managers at a national level, to secure better support for new starters, better training, and protection against being moved again while consolidating in a new role. It is critical we work together to ensure we protect our members and improve their working conditions.

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