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UNISON Hits Back At "Misleading" Local Government Productivity Claims

UNISON, the UK's leading public sector trade union, today hit back at a management consultancy's report on productivity in local government, calling the study misleading, unrepresentative and unhelpful.

Far from low productivity, comprehensive, independent studies show that public sector productivity has been rising since 2006 and recent job losses have left workers under huge pressure. Further cuts would not only turn back the clock, but would lead to vital local services shutting their doors.

Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary, said: *"This small survey flies in the face of evidence on public sector productivity, which, thanks to investment under Labour, has been rising since 2006. The real danger is that huge cuts now will turn back the clock, causing productivity to plummet, and a return to the dark days of Tory underfunding that ran local council services into the ground."*

The situation in Local Government now is more work on less shoulders. Council workers have delivered over and above targets for efficiency savings every year they have been set.

UNISON's latest independent staff survey shows 31% of council staff regularly putting in extra hours without pay or time off in lieu. Two thirds said that their workload had gone up from the previous year. This is even before the latest round of job cuts hit home.

"The public cannot be fooled into thinking that job cuts will not have a devastating impact on local services. 500,000 job cuts would decimate local services. Care homes, day centres, libraries and children's homes are already shutting their doors. Charges for services like home care, meals on wheels, or nursery places are on the up. Serious shortages in social work and social care already exist, any more cuts will leave vulnerable people without the support they need.

"It is a red herring to compare private and public sector productivity. How can you measure the productivity of a care worker, and compare it with a car worker on a production line? Public services are labour intensive, and do not have the same scope for replacing people with technology.

"Instead of constantly running local government workers down, we should be focusing on boosting morale, which would also have a knock on effect to productivity."

UNISON represents more than 850,000 local government workers, who work in libraries, care homes, as home carers, in parks and gardens, leisure centres, as social workers, teaching assistants, housing officers, in environmental health, as dinner ladies, school caretakers, meals on wheels staff and in local authority nurseries.