

## Council cuts put most vulnerable at risk

# CUTS COST LIVES



A militant response is needed to defeat the cuts. photo Paul Mattsson

## Build the fightback against all cuts

**T**HE TORY/LIBERAL-LED Birmingham council is preparing to trim £300 million from its budget by 2014 by cutting 10,000 jobs and devastating services. Amongst the cuts is its chilling proposal to set eligibility criteria for social care at 'super-critical'. This will become the norm for disabled and older people across England and Wales unless the Con-Dem cuts are stopped.

A Unison member

Adult social care services are provided under a 'Fair Access to Care Services' policy.

This identifies the four social services eligibility bands – low, moderate, substantial and critical.

Birmingham council is aiming

to restrict formal council-funded care to people with critical personal care needs, excluding those with substantial needs and those with critical needs who do not need help with personal care.

In layman's terms, the only social services that will be funded are those that ensure disabled people with the most complex needs are fed, bathed, dressed and toileted, and kept safe from serious harm, neglect or abuse.

This move will go much further than the already draconian critical eligibility criteria of Northumberland, West Berkshire and Wokingham councils.

For now, these councils meet all critical needs, including help with involvement in work or adult education and vital social relationships or family responsibilities.

Those disabled people and family carers living in Birmingham who will no longer be eligible for help will be expected to turn to charities and the voluntary sector for information, advice, advocacy and support.

This will not be much comfort for those who need a lot of physical help to get dressed, stay clean and tidy their homes, or those who are being neglected or abused but do not qualify for support.

Neither will it help the thousands of children under 16 in Birmingham who already provide care and support to parents and siblings, or the tens of thousands of family carers.

In keeping with Cameron's Big Society, Birmingham council is emphasising the role of volunteers in the provision of some council services.

But the thousands of social care workers who struggled to work every day during the severe weather have a right to ask if volunteers would do the same thing even if a vulnerable person was relying upon them.

When Birmingham council goes 'super-critical' it will be the logical conclusion of the underfunding of social services by successive Tory and New Labour governments since the 1980s.

The Fair Access to Care Services policy was introduced by New Labour to ensure social services provision was consistent across England and Wales.

It turns out that the only consistency being achieved is the decimation of essential social services for hundreds of thousands of working class people.

National Shop  
Stewards Network

**National  
anti-cuts  
conference**

**Saturday 22 January  
11.30am – 3.30pm**

South Camden Community  
School, Charrington Street,  
London NW1 1RG  
(by Euston Station)

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### whatwestandfor

**The Socialist Party fights for socialist change – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people.**

**As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.**

**The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.**

**Our demands include:**

#### Work & Income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retire-

ment pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstatement the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

#### Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

#### Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

#### Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

#### New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

#### Socialism and Internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!