

Stop the Salford day centre closures

Salford Socialist Party

Over 100 people – service users, carers, staff, pensioners – filled the room at a Salford Unison protest meeting to stop the closure of two day centres for the elderly and disabled. If the council has its way, 40 jobs will go and 200 service users will no longer have access to a day centre.

Pensioners' representative George Tapp pointed to the 27,000 pensioners who died of hypothermia last year. Closing day centres will mean pensioners in fuel poverty have to heat their homes more. He made it clear that we are fighting to retain all centres and we will have no truck with trade-offs.

George is standing for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition in this year's council elections in the ward containing one of the threatened centres.

Staff member Clare cut the ground from under the feet of Salford's Labour council who repeat the Tory line about 'needing to get away from a dependency culture': "Salford council say 'Get a life, not a service' - but what if the service is your life?"

Steve, a colleague of Clare's, pointed out that many disabled people in

their 50s have been attending day centres for 30 and 40 years and it is the high point of their week; their parents are often now in their 80s, struggling with infirmity, and need a break.

Social worker Ade explained how day centres combat loneliness and isolation for elderly people.

"Salford council say 'Get a life, not a service' - but what if the service is your life?"

A young mother, who has three children and also cares for her severely disabled brother, spoke: "It's hard but my brother loves the centre and it's all he knows. We have to fight."

Salford Unison secretary Steve North read out a solidarity message from Bolton Unison who fought off a similar attack 18 months ago, and outlined a programme of action with demonstrations and lobbies.

People queued at the end of the meeting to take model letters to councillors and window posters.



Campaigners from Ordsall ward, where the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition got 16% of the vote in last year's local elections, catch the bus to the Salford protest photo Steve Speed

Kirklees parents say 'save our children's centres!'

Mike Forster

Towards the end of last year, the Labour-led Kirklees council in Yorkshire announced a consultation over the future of 32 Sure Start centres.

The council proposes mothballing 17 of these centres, in effect halving essential childcare provision in Kirklees, once again hiding behind the government's cuts.

Refusing to even stand up to the Con-Dem government's agenda, the Labour councillors have merely decided to pass on these cuts.

But parents are resisting. At the start of January, a Saturday morning meeting of 35 parents launched a campaign and a 12-strong committee is now meeting every week to coordinate opposition.

Signatures

They have collected thousands of signatures, made three MPs support their campaign, organised two further public meetings, organised another bigger lobby of the council and called a local demo on 3 March.

Every centre is being visited by

17

Kirklees Sure Start centres will be mothballed under Labour plans

the committee to gather more signatures and identify more parent reps to coordinate the fightback. The parents are supported by the

local Unison branch which has donated £1,000 to the local group and offered practical support.

Parents are now lobbying every councillor demanding that they stop the phoney consultation exercise and look instead at measures to keep every centre open.

Local councillors are being bombarded with emails and invitations to visit the centres they intend to mothball.

Mayor apologises

The Kirklees mayor has been forced

to apologise for the "ignorant and unprofessional" conduct of a councillor.

Four parents had separately addressed the full council, but one councillor, Shabir Pandor, fell asleep during their impassioned submission.

Additionally, the Labour leader of the council was alleged to have been arranging to meet a friend on his Blackberry!

Parents are considering standing candidates in May's local elections against councillors who refuse to support the campaign.

Greenwich Unite members oppose cuts, privatisation and racism

Onay Kasab Greenwich Unite

Unite members in Greenwich, south London, were out in force for the second Saturday running on 21 January, fighting to stop the council privatising the library service.

Stalls in Eltham and Greenwich have attracted great public support. Not a single member of the public has said they want the service privatised.

The union believes that if Greenwich Leisure Limited takes over the service, as the council plans, this will be followed by cuts, closures and the introduction of charges.



photo Chris Newby

The union has already rumbled plans to scrap the mobile library and use volunteers to provide the service for the housebound.

Racist intimidation

The stall in Eltham was abused by racist BNP thugs who drove past several times in a BNP campaign lorry. Their friends were at the bottom of the high street handing out disgusting leaflets claiming that those convicted of the murder of Stephen Lawrence were innocent.

This made our stall, which put forward a united working class opposition to all cuts and privatisation, all the more important.

Socialists start campaign work in Leominster

Christopher Chesworth Leominster

On Saturday 21 January, Worcestershire and Herefordshire Socialist Party members held a stall in Leominster, Herefordshire, for the first time since the anti-poll tax movement.

Even in a rural market town people were very interested in socialist ideas and asked for copies of the Socialist paper. We sold 30 issues and raised £24 fighting fund in just 90 minutes, campaigning on the NHS. One person filled in a card for us to let him know when we will be doing a stall again or organising a meeting

in Leominster.

Many of those who signed our petitions worked in health care themselves and had experienced cutbacks already.

Find out about Socialist Party meetings at www.socialistparty.org.uk/whatson

Locally, in Hereford, the NHS dialysis unit – run by private firm Fresenius Medical Care Renal Services – is preparing to cut almost half of its workforce, meaning longer waiting times for treatment which will put more lives at risk.

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SOCIALIST PARTY FIGHTING FUND

	£ target	£ received	January-March 2012			Deadline 30 March
South West	1,400	434	█	█	█	█
Northern	600	185	█	█	█	█
London	6,100	1,393	█	█	█	█
North West	1,200	231	█	█	█	█
Wales	2,300	352	█	█	█	█
Eastern	1,200	167	█	█	█	█
East Midlands	1,550	135	█	█	█	█
Southern	1,200	101	█	█	█	█
Yorkshire	2,900	202	█	█	█	█
West Midlands	2,100	69	█	█	█	█
South East	1,000	5	█	█	█	█
England & Wales	3,450	37	█	█	█	█
TOTAL	25,000	3,317	█	█	█	█