

Sure Start children's centres axed by Tories despite David Cameron's pledge to protect them ^[1]

Author: Lyons, James

Source: Daily Mirror

Format: Article

Publication Date: 1 Jan 2011

EXCERPTS

Tory town hall chiefs are axing more than half their Sure Start children's centres - despite David Cameron's pledge to protect the vital service.

Conservative flagship Hammersmith and Fulham council is withdrawing funding from nine out of the 15 drop-in centres for under-fives in the London borough.

The rest will be contracted out in moves amid warnings it will be copied by other Tory-run local authorities up and down the country.

The cuts come despite repeated Tory denials that Sure Start would be axed. Mr Cameron even heaped praise on the "emotional support" the centres provide at his party's 2009 annual conference.

He declared, "Labour understood this and we should acknowledge that. That's why Sure Start will stay, and we'll improve it."

But Andy Slaughter, Labour MP for Hammersmith, said the PM had been caught out deceiving voters.

He said, "This is the biggest lie yet from the parties that promised to cut tuition fees and not increase VAT. And it is targeted at the most vulnerable.

Nine months after telling us they would strengthen Sure Start, they are cutting it by 60%. This is a taste of what every Conservative council is likely to do in 2011. It is the true face of Cameron's Britain. It's not the same old Tories - these are worse."

The Sure Start cuts were buried in a document sneaked out on the council's website over Christmas.

The area's only children's home is also being shut and sold off for luxury flats and libraries face closure as part of a package that will take \$7.5million out of services for young people.

Councillors will vote on the so-called "family support programme" on January 10.

A spokeswoman for the council claimed that the nine centres which will lose funding are not being closed because community groups will be invited to run them instead. She added, "We have to make \$65million of savings over four years."

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