

Cuts will force 250 Sure Start centres to close, say charities ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Daycare Trust press release: "250 Sure Start children's centres face closure within a year" ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Hundreds of Sure Start centres face closure this year and thousands of others are cutting services and have warned of job losses, according to a report today.

The closures and reduced services as a result of government cuts could see 60,000 families lose their local centre, it is claimed.

A study by the families charity 4Children and the Daycare Trust suggests 250 Sure Start centres are expected to close, 2,000 will provide a reduced service and 3,100 will have a smaller budget. Staff at 1,000 centres have been warned about the threat of redundancy, according to the survey of almost 1,000 centre managers across England.

The charities warn that closing centres risks withdrawing "crucial support" from families. They say the survey's findings should ring alarm bells, especially as the government has called for Britain to be the "most family-friendly country in Europe".

A survey of 25 councils in Children & Young People Now magazine shows youth services and children's centres worst hit as cuts average 13% in one year. Hampshire county council announced plans this week to close 28 Sure Start centres.

Frank Field, the Labour MP and government adviser on poverty and life chances, said: "It is inconceivable that we can make the foundation years effective if Sure Start all over the place are being slaughtered. Local authorities must seek to employ innovative methods to ensure families -- especially the poorest families -- do not lose the vital support they need."

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- reprinted from the Guardian

Region: Europe ^[3]

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