

CAMPAIGNING FOR CARE

in social services

INTRODUCTION TO THE 7 POINT STRATEGY

NUPE has developed a 7-point strategy to fight cuts and privatisation.

1. developing alternative ideas and demands to improve services
2. education and propaganda
3. building stronger workplace organisations and making links with workers in other places
4. developing joint action and user committees
5. tactical use of industrial action and negotiating machinery
6. direct action by workers and users
7. counter-offensive against contractors in public services

The following seven sections of the Action Pack cover each point of the strategy giving ideas and examples of organising and campaigning.

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Developing your own strategy

It is not a shopping list from which you can choose. We believe any campaign against privatisation must involve all seven elements of the strategy although the degree to which each is used will depend on local circumstances. No one tactic will win a struggle against contractors. Success will depend on using these seven strategies in combination.

The different elements in the strategy can be used in a very basic way to begin to build confidence, to strengthen workplace organisation, and to start taking ACTION. The important thing is to start with basic tasks which you have the resources to complete – don't initially take on more than you can achieve or action your members will not support. You

will have to build support for the more radical forms of union action.

It is essential to develop an early warning system to identify the threat of privatisation and to discover the extent to which privatisation has already occurred in your department. The Monitoring Sheets will help you to gather this information. You can't afford

to wait until there are firm proposals for privatisation because preparing the ground for privatisation can also result in creeping but substantial job losses, changes in working practices, cuts in services, and so on.

Campaigning to defend and improve jobs and services together with fighting privatisation requires commitment and resources

at a time when public services and trade unions are under increasing attack. The Introduction to this Action Pack explained the government's plans to intensify the privatisation of local government services, including social services. It is an issue about which branches and workplace organisations will be forced to take action. This may mean difficult choices in deciding priorities and how to use limited resources most effectively.

Remember!

- Privatisation in social services can take many forms including the increased use of private residential homes, private contractors, agency staff, volunteers, and imposing heavy demands on family, friends and neighbours to take care of the elderly, children and the sick through community care on the cheap.

- Privatisation is big business. The firms involved are mainly national and transnational companies. If a local firm does win a contract this only increases the likelihood of a takeover by a larger firm. The large firms have the resources to put in 'loss leader' bids (profits will be clawed-back by cutting corners and in anticipation of further contracts later) and spend extravagantly on propaganda and lobbying.

- Privatisation is a political attack on public services and cannot be fought by traditional trade union action alone.

- It cannot be fought by simply defending existing services or adopting defensive tactics – these must be part of a strategy to improve and expand public services and part of a counter-offensive against private contractors already operating within public services.

- Privatisation can only effectively be fought by joint action both within and outside the workplace. It cannot be separated from the fight against rate capping and cuts nor the struggle to obtain a decent living wage.

- Although privatisation often affects manual workers, particularly women workers, initially, all services are threatened including management, administration and central services. No job is safe from privatisation.

- It directly affects workers, the services and users and is therefore, an increasingly important issue for the trade union movement, community organisations, and other Labour movement organisations.

- We cannot and should not try to outbid the contractors – that means getting into a job loss, wage-cutting, downward spiral. Instead we have to campaign and negotiate for good quality and a wide range of services to meet social needs; decent pay, benefits and working conditions; and more worker and user control in running services. Contractors cannot compete on these terms.

- Constant education and propaganda is needed to expose the contractors, to counter-attacks on the public services in the media, and to build public support for public services.