

Celebrating 50 years

1 June 1973 - 2023

Strategies, alternatives and support to tenants and resident's groups, community campaigns, trade unions and public sector organisations taking action to improve the public infrastructure and public services

Shelter Community Action Team (SCAT) 1973-1978

Services to Community Action & Trade Unions (SCAT) 1978-1992

Centre of Public Services (CPS) 1992-2006

European Services Strategy Unit (ESSU) 2006–present

A continuity of working principles, values, practice and political economy analysis has been vitally important in sustaining the organization, albeit with four different names, over 50 years. This was especially important in working to expose the damaging impact of privatisation, marketisation and financialisation of public infrastructure and services.

The objectives, principles and working practices at the core of the Shelter Community Action Team (SCAT) project in 1973 continued with Services to Community Action and Trade Unions in 1978 and subsequently with the Centre of Public Services (CPS) in 1992 and the European Services Strategy Unit (ESSU) from 2006.

Objectives

The original objectives focused on work with tenants, residents and community organisations to:

- Provide strategic advice on policies and organising to build capabilities.
- Develop evidence-based policies that meet people's needs.
- Focus on the scope for alternative policies and processes.
- Jointly agree a work programme.
- Draw together evidence and impacts of policies to develop strategies centred on public sector alternatives, build community and trade union alliances and political support with industrial action when necessary.
- Improve participation, democratic accountability, transparency and equalities.

These objectives were added to as the work with trade unions and public sector organisations increased in the 1970s to include:

- High quality rigorous research, analysis and evaluation.
- Strategies and best practice to meet public service objectives.

- Commitment to public service principles, values, equalities and social justice.
- Training and development to build organisational capacity and strength.
- Assessment of impacts on service users, jobs, local and regional economies.

A fundamental objective was to disseminate analysis, findings and ideas widely to different audiences in accessible forms in order to empower community organisations and trade unions (as opposed to advocating on their behalf) and to increase local democratic accountability and community and employee participation in the public policy-making process.

At all stages we sought to promote equal opportunities and diversity and to identify inequalities in order to help to ensure that public policy responses, service delivery, workforce organisation and community and trade union responses took account of the needs of all equality groups. The active role of users and employees in public services and the local, regional and national public policy making process has been promoted since 1973.

SCAT, the Centre for Public Services and the European Services Strategy Unit developed a unique reputation for rigorous investigation, detailed research and strategic advice.

We worked closely with a diverse range of organisations including tenants and residents organisations, community campaigns and alliances and with local, regional, national trade unions in the UK and internationally. Parallel to the work with various organisations, we produced a succession of key research and policy reports and strategy documents which have significantly influenced thinking and action, both in the UK and in other countries.

The organisation consequently developed a vast body of work which remains highly significant and relevant today. This includes local, regional and national analyses of housing, planning, health and social care and a wide range of public policies focusing on public needs, values and equalities.

The SCAT, CPS, ESSU website <https://www.european-services-strategy.org.uk/> contains all the major documents published over half a century reflecting the analysis, findings and alternative strategies devised in support of principles and values critical to empowering local and national campaigns.

Working Practices

The formation of SCAT was the direct result of the successful launch of Community Action Magazine <https://www.peoplesplans.org/peoplesplans/community-action> in February 1972 when tenants and residents groups sought support and advice for their campaigns. Three members of the magazine's editorial group became SCAT workers.

Although the organisational name changed, various staff teams maintained a continuing commitment to the political economy approach, democratic and equality principles, values and practice established in 1973.

SCAT and the Centre for Public Services were independent, non-profit organisations (initially under the Housing legislation and later a Company Limited by Guarantee between 1978-2006) based in London from 1973-89 and in Sheffield between 1989-2004. ESSU was based in the Sustainable Cities Research Institute, Northumbria University for two years and currently operates from Ireland.

We operated as a team with regular meetings and a committee of advisors which oversaw the work, discussed the local needs of the organisations we were working with and the development of appropriate wider strategies. The Committee which had members with a background in public service management, policy, trade union and community activity,

usually met quarterly and had an important and valuable role in discussing projects; analysing our role in campaign strategies; advising on the scope of planned publications; approaches to sustaining our funding; and advising on employment, pay and condition matters. In earlier years we also held annual general meetings to which affiliates were invited.

Funding

SCAT was initially funded by Shelter, the national campaign for homeless people, with additional funding obtained in grants from the Cadbury Trust and the World Council of Churches and an independent donation to fund the printing of the first edition of the Great Sales Robbery report on council house sales. We also received funding from the London Boroughs Grants Scheme for advice and information work with London tenants and to Shelter for their grant until June 1998. The introduction of an affiliation scheme and a significant increase in the sale of the Public Service Practice series of publications increased financial stability.

In the 1980s commissioned work for the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) increased together with major projects undertaken for Labour controlled local authorities such as Sheffield City Council, Manchester City Council and Darlington Council supported by local trade union branches.

The 1990s included projects for UNISON, TGWU, the London Housing Unit, a national study for the Equal Opportunities Commission. The launch of PPP Strategic Partnerships for local authority services and the continued growth in Private Finance Initiative infrastructure partnerships led to many projects for local trade union branches providing critical analysis and alternative options in the 2000-2010 decade.

We originally adopted a wage policy to reflect the average industrial wage commenced as a matter of principle to reflect the large number of tenants and community organisations who frequently lived in poor housing and lived low wages or benefits. However, this constrained our policy to gradually improve our terms and conditions in the late 1970s and early 1980's. We started a pension scheme in 1986. Both were essential in recruiting and retaining team members.

Major challenges and projects

This section describes the range of issues and ways in which we worked with community campaigns, trade unions and public organisations.

Promoting housing improvement in opposition to demolition

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed what we defined as the 'slum clearance machine' when local authorities adopted the model of total clearance of older housing, moving residents out to overspill estates with few community facilities, shops and inadequate public transport. They paid little regard to the needs of residents, established social networks and access to jobs.

Many tenants and residents campaigns wanted community based renewal with phased demolition and new local building to create an opportunity for local rehousing.

Some tenants and residents organisations successfully stopped demolition of their homes with local authorities adopting improvement strategies. However, some local authorities persisted, leading to public inquiries chaired by an Inspector appointed by the relevant Secretary of State. We produced an Action Guide to Public Inquiries to help community organisations prepare their evidence and approach to the process.

We produced several documents exposing the flaws in system building, for example Damp, Defective and Dangerous: Cracks in Concrete; Investigating Your Building System, Raising

the Dust; Asbestos: Monitoring Contractors; and High and Dry: An Action Guide Based on Successful Campaigns by Tenants Against Damp and Defects.

Significant changes in the political economy since 1973

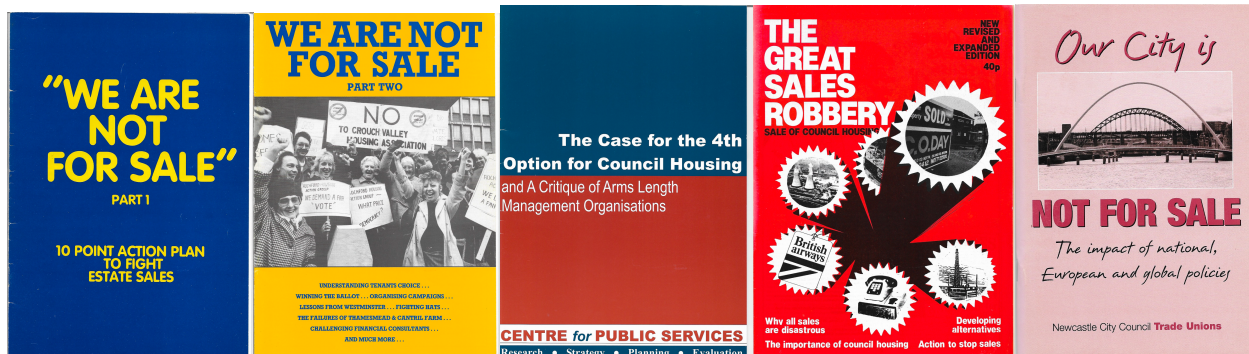
<p>Economic and political changes determined the agenda for community and trade union action and the ability of public sector organisations to address public needs.</p>
<p>1970s Recession 1973-1975 and oil crisis Slum clearance continues despite demand for improvement of older housing Sale of council housing to tenants Growth of opposition to motorways and major road campaigns</p>
<p>1980s Thatcherism and neoliberalism attack on public provision - cuts in public spending and rate capping to impose limits on local authority spending Sale of council housing by estate sales or stock transfer Privatisation and marketisation widespread Housing associations given key role in improving older housing Economic crisis and miners' strike in 1984/85</p>
<p>1990s Increased privatization of utilities and public transport Competitive tendering extended to white collar and leisure services Equal Opportunities Commission study proves gender discrimination Sale of Council estates and housing stock to housing associations Labour government speeds up implementation of Private Finance Initiative for public infrastructure</p>
<p>2000s Global financial crisis in 2008 and recession Growth of PFI infrastructure projects Labour Government's Strategic Partnership Taskforce promotes PPP Strategic Partnerships for local government services. Growth in outsourcing of public services and contract failures</p>
<p>2010s Austerity policies – transfer of services to arms-length companies, commercialising services, payment by results, individual choice mechanisms Social Impact Bonds launched as a new form of privatisation Privatisation of Royal Mail, privatisation by stealth Private Finance Initiative terminated – no new projects approved after 2018</p>
<p>2020s COVID pandemic Soaring cost of energy and food which required additional state support payments Inflation and austerity-driven pay restraint led to industrial action across the public sector and privatised rail Health and social care crisis</p>

Opposition to the sale or transfer of Council Housing to tenants, housing associations or arms length companies

The Great Sales Robbery: Sale of Council Housing (1976 and 1980) provided evidence of the potential consequences of the sale of council housing and became a standard document for elected members, tenants, community and trade union organisations.

First joint national trade union/community policy analysis on housing and the construction sector *Up Against a Brick Wall* was published by NUPE and SCAT (1978).

Following the Housing Act 1988 to dismantle council housing via the sale of estates and ultimately the sale of housing stock to housing associations, we produced two action guides *WE ARE NOT FOR SALE* for CASE, the national tenant and trade union campaign against the sale of estates. This was followed by the launch of Public Housing News and Housing Information Service reporting on the sale of estates and successful opposition. This was originally based at SCAT and transferred in-house when UNISON was formed.



We provided Doncaster Tenants and Residents Federation with joint training for tenants representatives and elected members at Northern College on community based housing management forums and housing options appraisal. Similarly we provided Liverpool Tenants Federation with training to enable the Federation to be fully involved in the selection of tenant’s advisers.

In 1980 we produced an analysis *Demolishing the Myths: Housing and Jobs in South Tyneside* for South Shields Trades Council and the Tyne and Wear Resource Centre. It explained why more private housing per se would not bring industry and jobs and the priority was for a continuous public housing programme in South Tyneside in the 1980s. Similar work was carried out with Leeds and Burnley Trades Councils.

In the early 1980s we established the National Anti-Dampness Campaign (a coalition of tenants federations, community organisations and local trade union branches) which was successful in bringing these issues to a national agenda, brought tenants campaigns together nationally and supported a number of successful tenant court cases.

The Case for the 4th Option for Council Housing was published in 2004 which included a critique of Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). It made the case for local authorities to have the same additional borrowing powers as ALMOs for investment to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Although 69 ALMOs were established in England, 55% have since transferred back to local authorities.

We provided Newcastle Tenants Federation with housing options analysis and other advice (1999-2003) and options for Future of Arms Length Housing Organisation in Newcastle (2007).

SCAT worked with several community campaigns confronted by property speculation including the Battersea Redevelopment Action Group and the North Southwark Community Development Group to produce a highly critical analysis (*Lie of the Land, 1976*) of the Community Land Act 1975 as a betrayal of land nationalization. It contained reports on Southwark, Cardiff, Lewes, Battersea and Newcastle in addition to a guide to the Act.

Action to retain and improve public services

SCAT produced an *Improve Public Services – Shut Out Contractors* for the London Division of the National Union of Public Employees in 1982. It included a seven-point strategy to campaign against privatisation and outsourcing which became a best practice model for community and trade union organisations. NUPE nationally produced an

education and information Keep Your Services PUBLIC pack in conjunction with SCAT which also detailed the 7-point strategy. It was adopted by many trade unions such as the New Zealand Public Service Association.

Labour-controlled Sheffield City Council engaged SCAT to work with cleaners and caretakers and the school meals service in the Education Department and workers in the Recreation and Cleansing Departments on a project to defend and improve local authority services and jobs in the city between 1985-87. It highlighted the potential impact of privatisation, cuts and rate capping on jobs, terms and conditions and the quality of services. We worked with shop stewards and groups of workers to produce leaflets, posters and reports on the job satisfaction of cleaners and caretakers in schools and manual and clerical workers in Parks and Recreation. A team of eleven workers and shop stewards produced a report setting out proposals to improve services and management practice.

The Public Cost of Private Contractors and Privatisation Audit was undertaken for Sheffield City Council (1986) to inform the National Anti-Privatisation Conference organised jointly by Sheffield City Council and the Local Government Information Unit in November 1985. The report examined the impact on local authority jobs in Sheffield; impact on the local economy, the impact on women's employment, accelerating changes in the labour market, public sector cost consequences of privatisation and the national implications.

A Job Satisfaction survey of Sheffield City Council's works department led to the development of an alternative services plan with shop stewards and Elected Members (1986). Similar surveys in Lewisham and Harlow Councils in 1986 identified key issues and attitudes that could improve innovation and management practice.

The Nottingham Heating Project published nine reports and developed new action strategies in 1985/86 that secured better heating systems for tenants but had to close in late 1986 due to lack of funding.

Manchester Contractors Audit - The Price of Winning: Lessons from the First Round of Enforced Tendering (1989) and the Contractors Audit: National Report & Database (1988). We later worked with the Environment & Development Department, Manchester City Council (1999) on a Best Value Audit of Environment and Development.



From 1992-93 onwards we provided training workshops on how to maximise public interest and values at every stage of the Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) process for a wide range of trade union branches. In this period we produced three reports assessing the impact of the externalisation of Civil Engineering services in Hereford and Worcester County Council and in Coventry City Council plus an analysis of the London Borough of Ealing's adoption of the enabling model and its outsourcing of Technical Services to Brown and Root.

UNISON national office commissioned CPS to write a Retendering Guide for CCT in Manual Services in 1995 which were followed by Sector Analysis for housing management, personnel services, information technology, legal services, financial services, and construction and property services. Each guide identified strategic lessons from earlier tendering, key contractors and market trends. The same year we produced 'Secret Services', a 192 page handbook for investigating local quangos for the Local Government Information Unit.

Newcastle City Council Business Centres were being considered for privatisation but a UNISON intervention and CPS analysis of their role in city economy stopped their privatisation (1999). We also produced a City Design report for Newcastle City UNISON on the future potential of architectural, landscape and related services in the city (2004).

CPS worked with the Improvement and Development Agency, the Employers Organisation, Local Government Information Unit, Association for Public Service Excellence, UNISON, TGWU and GMB to produce a Working Together for Best Value (2000). It set out the case for employee and trade union involvement, good practice guidelines and innovative and public management practice.

Shortly afterwards CPS published *Frontline Involvement: Good Practice Guidelines on employee and trade union participation on Best Value* (2001). It set out the need for a commitment to quality employment, equity, sustainability, and directly provided services; how employees and unions should be involved throughout the Best Value process, reorganising in-house services, examining market testing options and local agreements.

We produced reports for many trade union branches making the case against the transfer of Leisure and Library services to Trusts, for example in Hounslow, Newcastle, Dundee and Falkirk. We also wrote a national guide for UNISON detailing the flaws and failures in the trust model and why these services must be retained in-house. We exposed the flaws in the trust model when East Hertfordshire UNISON commissioned an analysis of the Council's leisure contract with Enfield Leisure Centres Ltd (Aspire Trust). It assumed an 8% increase in leisure income with a 10% cut in staffing costs which led to increased costs of nearly £1m over five years. The Enfield trust went into liquidation in 2006 and East Herts was forced to transfer leisure services to the Stevenage Leisure Trust.

We published an expanded edition of the Investigators Handbook, originally published by Community Action magazine (2003, now out of print).

In 2006 the Newcastle based NHS Business Services engaged KPMG to devise a method of outsourcing and offshoring the Prescription Pricing Division (which then processed over 750m prescriptions annually) to achieve £20m annual savings. Electronic transmission of Prescriptions was expanding rapidly and the in-house ICT team were already developing new software. UNISON Northern commissioned ESSU to prepare a detailed analysis of the outsourcing/offshoring plan. We developed a comprehensive evaluation matrix using 30 criteria including the local and regional impact of 2,085 job losses and the transaction and public sector costs.

The in-house option had a substantial advantage over the outsource/offshore option. "*The options appraisal and risk assessment shows conclusively that there is not a business case for outsourcing PPD functions.*" UNISON had balloted the 2,760 workforce to sanction industrial action at six centres. The then Health Minister rejected the NHS outsourcing proposal in late 2006.

North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) also engaged management consultants KPMG in 2006 to produce a "Business Transformation Plan" to produce £50m savings over four years. It was in essence a plan for mass outsourcing and privatisation. UNISON Northern region together with the GMB and teachers unions commissioned ESSU

to provide a detailed assessment of the impact of the KPMG plan and to propose an alternative transformation plan. The fundamental flaws in the KPMG proposals were exposed in a detailed report together with a comprehensive public sector strategy. The Council abandoned the KPMG plan.

In 2008 we produced an 80-page detailed Commissioning and Procurement Toolkit for Local Government and Health for the UNISON Northern Region. We also produced a technical report on how to legally exclude support services from Building Schools for the Future and Public Private Partnership projects for UNISON, GMB and National Union of Teachers.

Two attempts to outsource London Fire Brigade services were foiled by the FBU, UNISON and GMB branches and ESSU evidence. The Control room contract was stopped and specialist equipment was excluded from another contract (2011 and 2014).

ESSU was represented on the National Coalition for Independent Action Inquiry into the Future of Voluntary Services and produced a working paper on the 'Ideological Context', an analysis of neoliberal ideology, its objectives and role in the transformation of public services and the welfare state (2014).

Equal Opportunity impacts

Research of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) in 39 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales in 1995 undertaken by CPS for the Equal Opportunities Commission (1995) exposed the differential impact on women and men. We interview council officers, obtained contract data, organised meetings of frontline workers and trade union representatives to discuss their experience in all 39 local authorities and compiled a CPS report on the Calculation of the National Costs & Savings of CCT (this report was also published by the Public Sector Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney).



Other projects included a Social and Economic impact study for the Royal Hospitals Trust, Belfast (1993) over the threat of transferring health services to the City Hospital (evidence and a large march stopped the planned transfer); A similar audit was undertaken of the tendering process for the Down Lisburn Trust in 1995. Promoting Gender Equality in the Public Sector, Equal Opportunities Commission (2002); An Equality Impact Assessment for the Capitation Formula, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland (2002).

CPS was commissioned to develop the Case for a Positive Public Duty on Age Equality by Age Concern England (2004). We examined the context and impact of existing equality duties, evaluated the pathways to age equality, and the scope of a Public Duty for Age Equality.

In 2005 we produced a comprehensive analysis of National Performance Management Systems in Local Government, Health, Criminal Justice, Housing and Regeneration in England, Scotland and Wales for the Disability Rights Commission.

CPS also carried out an Equalities Audit for the University of Sheffield which examined current practice for students across the university, preparation of an action plan, implementation and monitoring strategy. An Economic Impact Study for the Universities and College Union and UNISON at the University of Leeds examined the impact of £35m budget cuts in 2010 on staff, education services and local and regional economy.

ESSU published Research Report 11 in 2020 on Equitable Recovery Strategies – Why public ownership and democratic control must be at the heart of Green and Integrated Public Healthcare Deals and ‘just transition’ policies.

North West Regional analysis

Between 2003-2005 we carried out number of projects for the North West Regional Assembly. They included the North West Relocation Project, the NWRA Response to the Lyons Review (August, 2003); advice and analysis on drafting of the North West Regional Emphasis Document (submission to Spending Review consultation) in October 2003; an analysis of the Health and Social Care Economy in the North West (2003); concluding with the Economic and Social Audit of the North West Region (2005).

Health and Social Care Economies

We undertook two further studies of health and social care economy with Health and Social Care and Sustainable Development in the East of England (2004): and the New Health and Social Care Economy – Sefton MBC, Liverpool and Greater Manchester City Regions and North West regional economy (2015).

We also participated in the Greenwich Healthy Urban Planning Project (with Organisational Development Services) for the London Borough of Greenwich and Greenwich Primary Care Trust (2007).

The NUPE/SCAT publication *Cashing in on Care* (1984) exposed attempts to reduce and remould key parts of the welfare state to an archaic version of community care. The following year we produced a 12-part Campaigning for Care in Social Services Action Pack for the National Union of Public Employees.

We worked with campaigns in several cities: for example, the Residents Action Group for the Elderly, Birmingham City with three major studies and impact assessments on future options for residential care homes in the city which included a survey of user, community and staff views, future options, social & economic impact of transfer (2000-2001).

We produced an analysis of Women's Employment in Care Homes for the Fawcett Society in 1996-97 which included an assessment of the care industry and future trends, employment, pay and conditions and comparisons between private, voluntary and local authority sectors.

We also supported trade union branches in Tameside, St Helens, Essex, Lancashire, Rochdale, Barnet, South Tyneside, Newcastle and Durham with reports that made the case against closure or sale and proposed alternative strategies. They often stopped or slowed the sale or closure of care homes.

Public policy best practice

Between 1997 - 2007 we produced a series of best practice reports which influenced mainstream thinking in Compulsory Competitive Tendering and Best Value in local government. They included research, training and strategic advice in the Public Service Practice series of reports:

- Monitoring Public Services (1991)
- Public Service and Business Plans (1993)
- Tender Evaluation (1994)
- Checking Specifications (1995)
- Strategy for Best Value (1997)
- Best Value Implementation Handbook (1998);
- User/Employee Involvement in Best Value, PFI and Partnerships (1998)
- Management Consultants – A Best Value Handbook (1999)
- Frontline Involvement - Good Practice Guidelines on employee and trade union participation in Best Value (2001)
- Options Appraisal Criteria and Matrix (2007).

We organised national workshops for local authority staff and trade unions on many of the above issues.

In 1997 we were commissioned by UNISON Greater London to examine the *Fragmentation of London Local Government*, including the effect on services, users, staff and trade unions. We identified five forms of fragmentation:

Institutional fragmentation that involved the formation of new institutions or transferring responsibilities from local authorities to new companies or trusts.

Organisational and managerial fragmentation describes internal division or responsibilities and duties to business units.

Service fragmentation treats services separately for tendering purposes which frequently conflicts with user needs and economies of scale.

Employer fragmentation resulting from institutional, organisational and service fragmentation leads to a sixth form of fragmentation with a multiplicity of employers with different terms and conditions.

Workplace fragmentation involves the physical separation of workplaces with different offices and depots. The five forms of fragmentation lead to a sixth form of fragmented in the monitoring of service delivery, loss of an overall perspective and the assessment of impacts on service users and staff.

We produced a discussion paper in 2008 on New Labour's modernisation strategy and its impact on democratic accountability and governance using a privatisation of governance

typology for Newcastle City UNISON, UNISON Northern and the Public and Commercial Services Union. It also drew on earlier analysis of individual local authorities adopting commercial approaches such as Lincolnshire County Council's 'enabling' model (1993), Bradford City's outsourcing agenda (2001) and Aberdeen City Council's community planning model (2006). Later examples include Cardiff Council's transformation strategy (2010) and Dorset Council's property and asset management strategy (2021).

In 2008 the ESSU was commissioned by Newcastle's West End Community Development Consortium to examine the national and local policy context of regeneration and to identify threats and opportunities. It also examined community, staff and trade union involvement, lessons learnt and community strategies required to have a significant impact on regeneration.



New Labour's failed PPP Strategic Partnerships for services

A Strategic Service-delivery Partnership (SSP) was a long-term, multi-service, multi-million pound Public Private Partnership (PPP) between a local authority and a private contractor. SSPs usually included ICT and related services such as revenues and benefits, financial and legal services, customer contact centres, human resources, payroll and often included property management. Some SSPs included architectural, highways, engineering and other technical services. Between 50 to 1,000 staff were transferred to a private contractor or transferred or seconded to a Joint Venture Company (JVC). Contracts were usually ten years with an option for a further five years.

Newcastle City Council corporate services were retained in-house following decisive action by the UNISON branch which included industrial action and internal workshops to develop an in-house alternative which had considerable advantages over a British Telecom bid (2001-02). This later led to strategic partnership services and ICT being retained in-house for Newcastle City Council's Building Schools for the Future (2005).

Our City is Not for Sale, Newcastle trade unions (2002) was an analysis of the government's modernisation agenda, corporatisation of the city, the implications of privatisation and marketisation, in a European and global context and led to an alternative strategy for Newcastle and nationally.

We made the case against a Bedfordshire County Council contract at a full Council meeting, but they commenced a 12-year £267m contract for a Strategic Service-Delivery Partnership (SSP) covering financial, information technology, human resources, school support services and facilities management with HBS Business Services in June 2001. Four years later the UNISON branch asked the Centre for Public Services to investigate the performance of the contract. We produced a damning analysis in *Strategic Partnership in Crisis* in April 2005, and HBS were served a termination notice by the Council on 12 July 2005 and 547 staff returned to local authority employment.

Detailed analyses of the impact on services, jobs and costs were carried with UNISON Branches in Middlesbrough, Southampton, Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Council and Liverpool. A Strategic Partnership was stopped in Kent County Council which focused on developing in-house capability. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Bury MBC and Salford MBC also decided to retain services in-house.

The Conservative controlled London Borough of Barnet embarked on a Future Shape programme in 2008 when it hired management consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers. Barnet UNISON, assisted by ESSU, systematically challenged every outsourcing proposal with detailed critical analysis and alternative policies. However, the Council awarded Capita Group Plc two large ten-year contracts for financial/central services, and a planning and regeneration contract with a combined value worth of £476m and transferred 868 staff to Capita. It also outsourced education catering and the parking service.

Earlier in 2016 Adult Social Care, Street Scene (waste collection, street cleaning) and Early Years Services (children's centres, early education and childcare, family support) with over 1,400 staff were retained in-house. The Council also took control of three care homes that had previously been sold to a housing association with 300 staff transferred to Barnet's arms-length company in 2019.

Planning and regeneration returned in-house on 1 April 2023 after Labour won the 2022 election. However, despite service failures, the Council extended Revenue and Benefit. IT and Customer Services to March 2026.

Northamptonshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council were drawn into a planned Strategic Partnership with Amey plc which required the two councils to merge. It was a blatant privatisation project. CPS was given access to some of the documentation to assess the potential impact of the project plus we produced two-part *A New Vision for Local Government* (2002) in the two local authorities. It detailed public service principles and values, increasing capability and continuous improvement and enhancing equalities and social justice. The second part was a critique of partnership by privatisation and the impact on accountability, public control and the local and regional economy. Both Councils withdrew from the project.

Between 2007- 2013 we produced six issues of the database on strategic partnerships detailing contract performance, those terminated and the reduced scope of contracts, the impact on staff, soaring public costs and reports from particular local authorities.

There were seventeen contract terminations and a further five reduced in scope with some services returned in-house accounting for 33% of contracts. The ten-year IBM contract with Somerset County Council and Taunton Deane Council had a £182m savings target, but it transformed into £69m additional costs for Somerset CC.

Critical analysis of Public Private Partnerships for public infrastructure

The launch of the Private Finance Initiative in 1992 and the new Labour Government decision to speed-up its implementation led to CPS providing workshops for community and trade union organisations on its impact and ways of challenging selected projects.

CPS and ESSU produced vitally important evidence that contributed to the termination of the Private Finance Initiative in 2018. For example, *Privatising Justice* detailed the impact of the Private Finance Initiative in the Criminal Justice System for the Justice Forum (2002) in particular the reliance on employing prison officers on significantly reduced terms and conditions.

A series of ESSU Research Reports exposed the growth of offshore investment funds and profiteering. *The £10bn Sale of Shares in PPP Companies* revealed 240 PPP equity

transactions that involved 1,229 PPP projects with an average profit of 50.6% (ESSU 2011). This was followed by *The PPP Wealth Machine* which detailed the UK and Global trends in trading project ownership (2012). *The Financial Commodification of Public Infrastructure* exposed the growth of offshore PFI/PPP secondary market infrastructure funds (2016).

Further evidence of the scale of buyouts, bailouts, terminations and major problem contracts in UK PPP projects (2017) followed by PPP Profiteering and Offshoring: New Evidence: PPP Equity Database 1998-2016 (2017). The Guardian newspaper and the Ferret investigation group commissioned a report in 2018 on ownership and offshoring of Non-Profit Distributing and Hub projects via the Scottish Futures Trust.

The PFI secondary market profiteering and offshoring research formed the basis of evidence to the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2011 and 2018 and the Treasury Committee in 2011 which was discussed in their final reports.

A report on Nationalising Special Purpose Vehicles to end PFI: A discussion of the costs and benefits for the Labour Party was jointly produced with Helen Mercer in 2018.

ESSU was represented on the Scotland Against Public Private Partnerships Task Force in 2022-2023 which produced a report *Financing Public Scotland: A Proposal for an Alternative to Public Private Partnerships*. ESSU produced a Briefing Paper on the Use of Tax Havens by Hub and PPP Project Companies (2023) and revealed Scottish Public Sector Pension Fund Investments in PPPs.

Public transport

Nexus, the Tyne & Wear Passenger Transport Authority, was required to seek tenders for the operational contract, a government imposed condition for £300m public investment. ESSU's Dexter Whitfield, was appointed as the trade union observer, on behalf of the Northern TUC, UNISON and UNITE, in the three week moderation stage of the bid evaluation process in autumn 2009. Bids were received from DB Regio (Deutsche Bahn) and Serco Rail.

The Northern TUC had earlier published an ESSU report on Deutsche Bahn's performance in Germany. It included the failure in 2009 to carry out safety checks which led to the withdrawal of 380 trains, a crisis in the Berlin S-Bahn with the city government withholding payments.

On 1 April 2017 the operation of the Tyne and Wear Metro finally returned to public provision. The North East Combined Authority decided not to extend the Deutsche Bahn 7-year operational contract for a further two years because of dissatisfaction with service performance.

Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive hired KPMG and Steria consultants in 2003 to advise on retaining the in-house service with increased investment or total or partial outsourcing Information Technology services.

UNISON and CPS had meetings with IT managers, Director of Personnel (one evaluation meeting included KPMG consultants) plus two meetings with UNISON focus groups. We identified the key issues, a way forward for IT services and a series of recommendations which resulted in the service being retained inhouse with increased investment.



AN ANTI-PRIVATISATION NEWSLETTER FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

56 issues of Public Service Action were produced between 1983-1997. It contained news, analysis and information focusing on key issues and developments in the public and recently privatised sectors. Each 12, 16 or 24 page issue reported on contract failures, campaigns and industrial action, company information, research, policy and legislative changes and had a print run of 10,000 copies, financed by NUPE, later UNISON, and subscribers. All issues, except No. 47 and 48, can be downloaded from the website.

We took an active role in the 15 member Network of Labour and Community Research and Resource Centres in the 1980s and 1990s including a series of weekend strategy and education events held at Northern College near Barnsley.

International projects

We produced a Public Service Practice Handbook on taking action against privatisation for Public Services International (1994).

Fines, Failures and Illegal Practices in North America: a Private Healthcare Dossier was published by NUPE/SCAT in 1984 which detailed the activities of transnational companies in the USA and Canada seeking to establish a place in UK privatisation. The damning evidence was obtained from trade unions and research at the US Securities & Exchange Commission which requires companies to report legal action being taken against them for service failures or operational disputes.

Another team member spoke at a conference on privatisation in France in 1986 and SCAT was visited by trade unionists from Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and France.

A month of training events was organised by trade unions in New Zealand with workshops in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin (1991). It included a series of seminars for local authorities, health boards and other public sector bodies.

Team members participated in a conference in the Netherlands in 1988-89 on Women and Flexibility, another in Denmark on the privatisation of social services, and organised sessions on health and safety and contract compliance for Finnish trade unionists visiting the UK. Team members attended many other conferences and meetings in European cities.

SCAT, CPS and ESSU were involved in conferences and briefings with trade unions in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sidney, Australia (1990, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2010 and 2014).

Other international projects included:

‘Reinventing Government in Britain’ study of Next Steps Agencies was produced for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), Washington DC (1996-97) who were concerned of a similar model might be adopted by the US government.

Briefing on shared services in Canada for the Australian Institute for Social Research and the Public Service Association (2007).

Team members attended European Social Forums in Florence (2002), Paris, (2003) and Athens (2006).

Privatisation and P3s in Britain: Impacts and Strategies, Canadian Union of Public Employees Conference, New Brunswick, Canada (2008).

A planned PPP for a men's and women's prison 50 miles outside Adelaide at Murray Bridge, South Australia was abandoned following local opposition and a study of the Economic Impact of Prisons in Rural Areas in the USA by ESSU in 2008 commissioned by the Australian Institute for Social Research, University of Adelaide.

Briefings on Austerity prepared for the Australian Workplace Innovation and Social Research Centre, University of Adelaide conference and meetings with trade unions and voluntary sector organisations (2014).

New Forms of Privatization international conference, Keynote speaker, Ottawa, Canada, October 2014, National Union of Public and General Employees, Canada.

A global analysis of social impact bonds was published by the Australian Workplace Innovation and Social Research Centre, University of Adelaide (2015) which was the first extensive critical commentary on a new method of privatisation.

Submission of evidence to The Peoples' Inquiry into Privatisation in Australia (2016).

Several meetings and conferences in Berlin with Gemeingut BurgerInnenhand.

A report on the Global, State and City dimensions of privatisation was submitted to the Select Committee on the Privatisation of Public Services in South Australia (2021).

The summaries of several reports were translated into Chinese by a Professor at the Beijing Administrative College and are available on the ESSU website.

The 25th Anniversary Conference of the Centre for Public Services '*Rethinking Public Services for the 21st century*' was held on 21 May 1998 at Sheffield Hallam University. Keynote Speakers were: Richard Caborn MP (Minister for the Regions, Regeneration and Planning), Rodney Bickerstaff (General Secretary, UNISON), Ruth Lister (Professor of Social Policy, Loughborough University), Al Bilik (President, Public Employees Department, AFL-CIO, USA), Judith Hunt (Chief Executive, Local Government Management Board), John Benington (Director, Local Authorities Research Consortium, Warwick University), Larry Elliott (Economics Editor, The Guardian), Hilary Wainwright (Writer and Editor) and Dave Feickert (TUC European Office).

Website – high level of users and document downloads

The Centre for Public Services launched its website in 1998 (now European Services Strategy Unit). It contains the publications of SCAT, the Centre for Public Services and the European Services Strategy Unit. The website has been developed, maintained and hosted by Webarchitects, Sheffield, since 1998 and we highly recommend them to other organisations.

Between 1 January 2009 and 31 May 2023 the website had a total of **685,290 users** who downloaded **440,105 documents**.

Collaborative work with the relevant organisations and individuals and lessons learned from working with users, community and trade union organisations has been vitally important. This evidence was critical in enabling Dexter Whitfield to write nine books from 1983 onwards analysing privatisation and marketisation, corporate welfare, public private partnerships infrastructure projects, impact of austerity, the rise of corporate power in renewable energy and advancing public sector alternatives.

SCAT, CPS and ESSU staff

Original SCAT Team 1970s and early 1980s

Ian Christie (Lancashire)
Mike Fleetwood (Newport and Cardiff)
Keith Mollison (Leeds)
Peta Sissons (London)
Dexter Whitfield (London)

London team in 1980s:

Frances Carter
Jane Foot
Steve Nathan
Robin Arthur
Jenifer Gordon
Roger Critchley, Nottingham project
Dexter Whitfield

Sheffield team from 1989:

Karen Escott
Alex Nunn
David Granville
Anne Rosewarne
Christine Bogue
Kate Ribey
Dexter Whitfield

Newcastle – ESSU relocated from Sheffield to the Sustainable Cities Research Institute, Northumbria University from February 2006 to August 2007 and now operates from Ireland.

Dexter Whitfield (Adjunct Associate Professor, Australian Industrial Transformation Institute, Flinders University, Adelaide).

Sadly, Mike Fleetwood and Ian Christie (original SCAT team), Keith Hayman (CPS Committee), Kenny Bell (Newcastle UNISON) died in the last fifteen years. They had a major role in ensuring the continuity and success of the organisation and are sorely missed.

Organisations we have worked with:

Community organisations

Cardiff Housing Action
Doncaster Standing Committee of Tenants
Fatima United Group & St. Michael's Estate, Dublin, Ireland
Liverpool Tenants Federation
Meadows Area Tenants And Residents, Nottingham
New Basford Residents Association, Nottingham
National Campaign Against the Sale of Estates
National Anti-Dampness Campaign
National Tenants Organisation
Newcastle Tenants Federation
Residents Action Group for the Elderly (RAGE)
Ryedale HA Tenants Association
Sandwell Tenants Federation
South Birmingham Community Health Council

Stonebridge Tenants Advancement Committee, Brent
Tenants and Residents in Burnley, Lancashire
Tenants and Residents groups, Newport & Cardiff
Tenants organisations in Sheffield
Tenants and Residents Groups in Todmorden & Calderdale
West End Community Development Consortium, Newcastle upon Tyne
Yorkshire Development Group tenants in Leeds, Hull, Sheffield and Nottingham

Trade Union organisations

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO)
Association of Magistrates Officers
Burnley Trades Council
European Public Services Union
Fire Brigade Union
GMB
Justice Forum UK
Leeds Trades Council
National Education Union
National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
Public and Commercial Services Union
Public Services International, Geneva
Public sector trade unions, Australia & New Zealand
TGWU (now UNITE)
UCATT (now UNITE)
National Union of Public Employees and NALGO - now UNISON National Office and Regions
UNISON East Midlands
UNISON London
UNISON Northern
UNISON Northern Ireland
Over 75 UNISON branches
UCU (University and College Union)

Other organisations

Age Concern England
Chartered Institute of Housing Crime and Justice Foundation, University of London
Defend Council Housing
Fawcett Society
Nuffield Institute for Health
Scotland Against Public Private Partnerships Task Force

Public bodies and organisations

Association of London Government
Community & Voluntary Forum Eastern Region
Department of Health, Eastern Region.
Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety, Northern Ireland
Disability Rights Commission
East of England Regional Assembly,
Development Agency
Environment Agency
Department of Health Employers Organisation,
Equal Opportunities Commission
Improvement and Development Agency

Local Government Management Board
Local Government Information Unit
London Housing Unit
North Tyneside Community Health Council
North West Regional Assembly
North West Regional Housing Board
Pinderfields & Pontefract Hospitals NHS Trust Wakefield
Royal Hospital, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
University of Sheffield

Local authorities

Birmingham City Council
Blackburn Borough Council
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Chesterfield Borough Council
Darlington Borough Council
Derby City Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Harlow Council
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council
Leeds City Council
Lincolnshire County Council
London Borough of Ealing
London Borough of Haringey
London Borough of Greenwich
London Borough of Lewisham
London Borough of Southwark
Manchester City Council
Newcastle City Council
New Directions, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Nottingham City Council
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Sheffield City Council
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
Stockton on Tees BC
Swansea City Council
Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Council

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