

ARUNDEL, WALBERTON AND BARNHAM BRANCH

July 2024

Election campaign

Many thanks to those members who ran an attractive and effective campaign. Our vote held up in the constituency whilst nationally the Labour vote slipped. We were very close to the Liberals. The Tories fell by a third.

In our branch area members leafleted much of the town and the villages which we will target again for the county council elections next year. Our star members were Oli, who covered Fontwell and parts of Walberton on his own and Hannah with brother Euan who posted leaflets and canvassed in Walberton. Laurie, despite injuries, Hilary, Deborah and Paul all worked in our most important streets. Emma called at addresses in Binstead and Penny did the same with her West Barnham neighbours.

Thanks are due to Alwyn who organised the Barnham station leafleting with Ed and Deborah.

Joe, who has transferred into the branch, canvassed successfully in Worthing West as well as for Tulip Siddiq in Highgate and leafleted in Barnham. He was part of the successful operation to get out the vote in Worthing for Beccy Cooper along with Michael, Paul, Hannah, Deborah and myself. The campaign to elect Tom in East Worthing was helped by Oli and others.

Following national party guidelines our local canvassing was restricted but we followed the preparation in the area with a doorstep effort with Chris the candidate. A much larger effort was made by branch members in Bognor Regis and Littlehampton where Clare Walsh came close to beating the Tory candidate. The positive message for our branch is the big contribution by younger members.

Finally thanks to the telephone bankers who helped maintain the vote in our area and those from our branch and elsewhere who campaigned from the battle bus in Arundel and Walberton.

County Council campaign.

Canvassing in Arundel and Courtwick will begin soon. Hopefully a team can begin work by getting on the street for a couple of hours every month. The possibility of a dedicated leaflet is under discussion.

Arun Labour Local Government Committee

There is a proposal for a District meeting and leaflet for our Labour councillors to discuss progress made within Arun District Council and our socialist programme for the next year. Information should be forthcoming in September.

Arundel, Walberton and Barnham branch meeting in Coronation Hall, Slindon

Hannah will propose the following resolutions at the meeting on ***Tuesday 13th August at 7.30pm.***

Puberty Blockers

The Labour Government's Health Secretary, Wes Streeting MP, has decided to continue with his Conservative predecessor's emergency ban on puberty blockers for transgender children. Victoria Atkins MP's decision, according to court documents, was reported to have been motivated by her personal view rather than by appropriate evidence.

For gender-questioning children, puberty blockers can temporarily pause their puberty so they can consider the possibility of a medical transition. For some other children, puberty blockers are used to safeguard against the effects of precocious puberty. Evidence has consistently confirmed that both uses are safe and effective.

Trade unions, human rights groups and LGBTQ+ organisations stand resolutely against Streeting's decision to uphold and make permanent this ban. It is distinctly opposed to the indication of many BMA members that 'trans people should be treated with compassion and respect for their bodily autonomy', since it politicises the choices available to these children. The reality that under-18s must now wait for over 5 years for a first appointment with a gender service and that 16 children on waiting lists died by suicide in the space of 4 years indicates that the current system is already inadequate. Decisions made by ideology rather than evidence will not improve this situation.

Streeting claims that his decision's prime influence is the recent report written by Baroness Hilary Cass. However, while it raises some criticisms of children's gender care in the UK, Cass's report does not recommend the criminalisation of puberty blockers.

In this light, Arundel and South Downs CLP calls on the Health Secretary to immediately lift the puberty blocker ban. The CLP:

- asks the Labour Government to only act with its manifesto commitment to 'remove indignities for trans people who deserve recognition and acceptance' in mind, extending this to 'acceptance' of social and medical support for gender-questioning children;
- recommends that the Health Secretary addresses the concerns of Labour backbenchers (like Kate Osborne) who are vocally opposed to his decision,
- wishes that Streeting properly justifies his implication that it is safe for children to take puberty blockers for precocious puberty, but not when they are transgender,
- implores that the Government should consult with transgender charities or organisations on this issue.

Rather than a blanket ban, the CLP instead believes that the prescribing of puberty blockers on the previous, case-by-case, basis continues to be the best practice.

The CLP welcomes the King's Speech text that 'A draft bill will be brought forward to ban conversion practices' — which it understands will be a comprehensive, trans-inclusive ban — but warns that simultaneously continuing to ban puberty blockers might precipitate a belief that the state is actively discouraging gender-questioning children from seeking the medical support they might require.

Two Child Benefit

Since its introduction, the two-child benefit cap has meant that parents can only access the universal credit or child tax credit applicable to their first two children. In the ongoing cost of living crisis, UK households affected by this policy — 450,000 in 2024 (up from 71,000 in 2017) — have thus not been eligible to receive the support that they deserve and are forced to continually tighten their budgets.

The DWP estimates that, in 2023, 1.6 million children lived in a household affected by the two-child benefit cap policy. With child poverty at an all-time high, the Child Poverty Action Group says that this policy costs some households over £3,000 a year.

Therefore, it is in this context that the Arundel and South Downs CLP

- urges the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour Government to reconsider keeping a policy that has driven such inequality across households in the UK,
- recommends that the Government removes the two-child limit as a priority in its strategy to stop child poverty from further increasing,
- and

- asks the Parliamentary Labour Party to re-examine, acknowledge and address the points raised in an Early Day Motion tabled by Jon Trickett MP in July 2023, among which
 - ‘the two child limit along with the benefit cap ’are described as ‘poverty-producing policies’
 - it is noted that ‘a majority of children ’who experience poverty live ‘in poverty in households where at least one adult is in work’.

Will Ashton, secretary

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