

File: Cllr Salma Mahmud 4

I've lived in the borough, Waltham Forest, all my life. As a child we used to have Labour Party branch meetings at our house, so I'd be running round as a kid and then there'd be meeting. I grew up in the eighties when there was a lot of activism going on. I still remember every Sunday being woken up by a marching band and looking out the window, and there's a marching band and there's teachers and nurses, keyworkers, and party members just marching down Church Hill towards the market, 'cause there was always something to actually fight against <laughs> in the eighties, and it was just really great to see so many people that cared about where they lived and also their neighbours and people that they were fighting so strongly for. I was in my twenties when I joined, early twenties when I joined the labour party. One of the reasons I actually became a councillor is because I remember quite vividly complaining to my dad about the number of stabbings and the death that occurred very close to where I live. The gang that was in operation, they took over the estate at night and because there were no security doors there, when the police were called by residents living there they would come and then the drug dealers, gang members, would just run off, and eventually residents stopped calling the police 'cause it didn't make a difference. Children weren't allowed to play outside the house or anything, and that's the thing that really got me, and I became a councillor, lobbied for security doors, so they've all got security doors now. That in combination with the council's gang prevention strategy, almost overnight the gang issue just disappeared. Politics can make a huge difference to the lives of people.

<End of interview>