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Get involved!

NEC member Karen Alderson writes about how PCS members can become more active in the union.

If you are reading this, then you are already a union member, you have already made that initial first step in having your voice heard in your workplace and being part of a collective.

In the Home Office, we have seen what that voice can achieve and what that strength can look like, with five weeks of unprecedented action in my own department, HM Passport Office (HMPO). Our members played a pivotal role in helping PCS gain concessions across the civil service, including guarantees on the compensation scheme and the cost-of-living payment.

Undoubtedly, the threshold-busting turnout for both industrial action ballots in the Home Office and ensuing targeted action, not only in HMPO but at our borders, massively contributed to our recent pay award, which was a significant uplift for many of our members.

We have branches covering all of our workplaces and you can get involved at whatever level you want to. Even prior to becoming a rep I was an active member, keeping up to date with PCS communications and attending members' meetings and picket lines.

There was no advocate role back then, but that's what I would have been called. I helped our branch with leafleting, recruited other members of my team, contacted my branch when there were local issues they should be aware of, and offered my reps support.

When I first became active I was a young mum working part-time. I gave whatever time I was able to and my branch were very grateful for that. Your contribution can be as little or as large as you want it to be. We need our members to engage and talk to their local reps, keeping us informed of what is happening in their work area. It's well worth speaking to your local branch and asking how you can become more involved.

We were able to deliver the mammoth action in HMPO because we had well-organised branches, with active reps and members. We have shown what can be achieved. The more active our membership, the louder our voice!

Karen Alderson, assistant group secretary and NEC member