

11 September 2023

TUC Congress: Uplift benefits and scrap punitive claimant sanctions, says PCS

PCS called for an immediate and permanent uplift in benefit rates to match inflation during a debate at the TUC Congress in Liverpool.

PCS Deputy President Martin Cavanagh moved [composite motion 8](#) today (11) which called for more resources for the DWP to help those in most need and for the scrapping of punitive measures, including the sanctions and conditionality regime. He said that the Tories have made it more and more difficult for those people who have to claim benefits.

“The social security system should be there to support everyone from day one at the time of most need,” he said. “Those who need social security should be able to get it in the same way that anybody is able to access free healthcare and education one day one at the point of need.”

He described how the Covid pandemic highlighted the vital role of the social security system with an unprecedented number of people turning to it during a time of national crisis. He said our members are “not the problem. We'll not allow others to scapegoat PCS members and to say they're the problem. The Tories are the problem, any right-wing politician who sees those who claim benefits as a blight or a problem, they're the ones that should step aside and move on.”

The motion called calls on the TUC General Council to campaign for changes to disability-related benefits to ensure they meet the needs of disabled people. And highlight the negative impact that conditionality and back-to-work narratives have on disabled people's lives and rights. It also recognised the insufficiency of current provision.

Not fit for purpose

Paul Valentine of Equity, who is also a PCS member at the South Bank Centre in London, seconded the motion and told Congress that the application of the UC

Minimum Income Floor (MIF) is causing extreme hardship among self-employed and atypical workers in many industries, including the creative and cultural sectors. He said his union is pushing for its abolition.

He said that the social security system is “not fit for purpose for creative workers” and added that “concerted attacks on our social security system by this government and some media organisations have hurt all working people.”

He cited a report from Equity and the University of Warwick which evidences:

- Four out of 5 members report that UC has not helped them to work in the industry, this compares to three quarters who said that previous social security systems had helped them.
- 41% of those subject to the MIF have gone without essential items such as food or utilities.
- 46% of those subject to the MIF have been unable to pay household bills.
- 5% were forced to leave their home as a result of the MIF.

Natasha Hirst, president of the NUJ, highlighted how her union has worked to change how the press reports on social security and disabled people in particular, who have been the target of hateful rhetoric.

She said: “This government treats disabled people with utter contempt, cutting away at their rights.”

The motion was carried.

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