

25 September 2023

PCS Disabled Members' Forum opens autumn equality seminars series

PCS members gathered in Birmingham at the weekend for our disabled members' seminar, the first of four equality seminars being held this autumn.

The seminar was chaired by PCS national president Fran Heathcote, who welcomed the attendees and read a letter from [National Disabled Members' Forum](#) (NDMF) Chair, Hannah David, who was unfortunately unable to attend. Caroline Brown, secretary to the NDMF, spoke about the pan-equality seminar and the importance of intersectionality, as well as the different equality groups focusing on their own areas and having their voices heard.

The Saturday afternoon session opened with an ice-breaker delivered by Ian Thomas (Welsh Government), before hearing about the history of disability and society's evolving attitudes towards it in a session with Andy Boylan (MoD). Andy went on to lead a session giving an overview of disability discrimination regarding direct and indirect discrimination.

After the break, Sarah Lawrence and Simon Deacy of [Deaf Friendly Ltd](#) took the attendees through an introduction to British Sign Language (BSL), concluding that even learning a little BSL could make someone with hearing loss feel included. Deaf Friendly Ltd has delivered BSL sessions to a number of PCS branches and groups, and it was well-received by the attendees.

On Sunday, PCS national organiser Pete Lockhart took the attendees through the PCS Organising Strategy before guests from rail unions (TSSA President Melissa Heywood, RMT Regional Organiser John Watson and Amy Nicholson of the ALSEF National Disabled Members Committee) spoke about the campaign their unions had been running to save ticket offices. They then held a Q&A session with the PCS reps to share their knowledge and experiences of the campaign, and how unions stood up, not only for their own members but for disabled people across society.

There were some very important and engaging debates across the weekend, with attendees sharing their own experiences, giving insights into how issues were dealt with in different departments, and learning from best practices.

The [PCS equality seminars](#) continue with the women's seminar in two weeks (7 and 8 October), followed by the black members' seminar on 28 and 29 October and concluding with the LGBT+ seminar on 25 and 26 November.

Read more from the disabled members' conference on our [X \(formerly Twitter\) account](#) and [Facebook page](#).