

27 October 2023

National Campaign

The results of the recent consultative ballot showed an overwhelming endorsement for the NEC's strategy for the next steps of the national campaign. On a 47% turnout, 90.3% voted for the strategy.

In the national ballot to renew the strike mandate, which ran between 20 March and 9 May, DWP fell short of the 50% turnout required by 1.3%. At both DWP group conference and our national conference in May, it was agreed that PCS would reballot members in DWP. By this time the pay offer for 2023/24 had increased from 2% to 4.5%, with an additional 0.5% for the lowest pay. We were however confident at this point that we would be able to push the vote out in DWP.

Shortly after conference, however, a further offer was made, which included a £1500 non-consolidated one-off lump sum for 2022/23 to help with the cost of living. This was on top of the previously offered 4.5% plus additional 0.5% for lowest paid. There was also a guarantee that there would be no changes to the CSCS for the duration of the current government, and a commitment to further talks on low pay and pay coherence across the civil service.

The NEC at this point took the decision to consult with members via meetings, as well as holding Facebook Live events, before taking any decision on rebalotting members. The consultation would be used to inform members of what the offer was, as well as advise of what was left in the fighting fund, and what this would mean in terms of further action. As the fighting fund was depleting, it would mean an increase to the levy if we wanted to continue sustained action at the levels we had been taking. We would also need to consider increased unpaid action.

Feedback from the members' meetings was very mixed, with many members advising they would not be able to afford increased levies or unpaid action. Others stated they would want to continue. However, when we looked at all the feedback we received, we were less confident that we would get the required turnout in DWP, which is the biggest department group in the union. We also were not convinced we would get the turnout in other areas where the mandate was due to be renewed.

While this consultation was happening, delegated pay teams entered into talks with their respective employers on the £1500, where we pushed for this not to be pro-rated, and also for it to be disregarded for benefit purposes. It looked as though the DWP were going to meet our demands, but at the last minute they insisted it would be pro-rated and it could not be disregarded. While we disagreed on this, we agreed to it being paid at the end of July in order to move forward with the talks on the pay remit. We did seek legal advice on whether this was discriminatory under the Equality Act, but unfortunately the advice was not positive.

With PCS now in talks, we were able to influence the payments towards the lowest paid members, ensuring there was a differential between AA and AO grades, and that lower grades would get a bigger slice of the non-consolidated bonus. Again, although better than before PCS entered into talks, many of our demands were not met and the DWP GEC voted to reject the offer.

The NEC developed a strategy, which was put to members in the form of a consultative ballot. The proposed strategy would allow us to:

- Continue to call targeted action in areas yet to pay the £1500; re-balloting where necessary in areas currently without a mandate.
- Engage in pay talks for 2023/34 at delegated level; seeking to maximise the current available monies for members; and seeking to get employers to implement on the best possible terms.
- Engage in the coherence and job security talks to make progress on our objectives.
- Call a temporary cessation of industrial action while we engage in those talks, including pausing strike action and re-ballots in pursuit of our national demands.
- Continue to campaign over the strictures on the £1500, including pro rating.
- Continue to campaign on pensions, including taking legal action.

The ballot ran from 3 August to 31 August, and during this time we held members' meetings and further Facebook Live events, as well as asking reps and advocates to engage with members face to face and via the organising hub.

As previously stated, the result was an overwhelming endorsement for the strategy. Talks are happening at national level with the Cabinet Office, where we continue to push for our demands to be met, including full payment of the £1500.

The campaign is far from over, and we still have the option to reballot members on industrial action if talks are not productive.

Members should ensure that their own details are up to date, including providing personal contact details. If you are not registered on [PCS Digital](#), please do so. Speak to your local rep if you need assistance.