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How minimum service levels will affect Border Force and Passport Office members

Ahead of a TUC special congress on the government's plans to strip the democratic right to strike from hundreds of thousands of workers, we look at how it could affect our members in Border Force and the Passport Office.

Last week, PCS condemned the government for promising to rush through anti-strike laws which would effectively criminalise strike action for thousands of our members.

The Minimum Service Levels Act would limit the impact of a strike by forcing workers to maintain a level of service in the industry they work, through the use of minimum service levels (MSL).

Given the important nature of the work that our members in the Border Force and Passport Office carry out, this legislation, which is at odds with international law, is dangerous and reckless.

Authoritarian crackdown

As part of our historic national campaign, Border Force and Passport Office members were among the hundreds of thousands of workers who took hard-hitting actions across 2023.

It's obvious that this crude MSL legislation is designed to limit the effectiveness of trade unions and to undermine any potential future action.

We also believe that the legislation potentially breaches international law, including article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

This is an authoritarian crackdown on the human right to take industrial action and contravenes our members' freedom of expression.

Brazen assault

The government has published a draft legal instrument which states that: “On each day of the strike, the border services are no less effective than they would be if the strike were not taking place on that day.”

Although there is some question about the standard service due to understaffing, the clear implication is that our Border Force members are not allowed to take action.

There is also a reference to a select number of Passport Office staff, who we believe have an impact in relation to national security rather than regular passport creation.

While they are a brazen assault on the trade union movement, these proposed restrictions are a strong endorsement of the fact that our members are invaluable to the running of the UK and national security.

If this legislation had been in place in 2023, our members would have been prevented taking strike action – actions that helped win significant concessions on pay in addition to a cost-of-living payment.

[PCS will join a special TUC congress in London](#) on 9 December which will “explore options for non-compliance and resistance” to the government’s anti-trade union restrictions which represent a direct attack on workers’ rights.

Please check back on the PCS website and our social media channels over the next few weeks for more content on minimum service levels and how this would affect our members.

Not yet a PCS member? [Join online today](#).