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## **International Women's Day inspired me to join a PCS Women's Network**

Susete writes about the benefits she gains from being a member of her region's PCS women's network, a safe space for women to support and help each other - and make new friends.

I work at Tate Britain. I've been a PCS member for over 20 years and a union rep for 10. I decided to become a union rep after returning from maternity leave and realising that my branch at the time did not have any female reps with whom I could take up some issues. So I decided to step forward and take on the role of women's officer, a role that had never been filled in the branch.

It was very important to have a voice for female members as there were a group of women like me with small children. I felt it was important to raise some pertinent issues with management regarding parents and caring responsibilities and to make sure my employer was treating all staff fairly.

I'm still the branch women's officer today.

### **A breath of fresh air**

I joined the PCS London and south east (LSE) women's network last year, by chance after receiving an email celebrating International Women's Day. The network has been like a breath of fresh air to me. I have met so many interesting women who also work in the civil service, and sharing our experience together, collectively understanding the issues we all face in life and in the workplace, as women, has been very empowering. We come together and discuss related issues regularly and draw up work and plans to tackle them.

The group also hosts events and it's great to meet up and discuss some matters more informally. The network provides a safe space and time for women to switch off and laugh together.

### **Confident and support**

I feel hugely supported by the group and I gain confidence from being around like-minded people working toward the same goals of improved lives for women.

Already, my workplace is a safer and more amenable place for women, especially since I work in a public building and must deal with many different people each day which presents its own issues for women. My employer is usually very understanding; however, when problems occur they often need to be raised by a union rep before things start to happen and the employer sits up and listens and takes seriously difficulties faced by women in the workplace.

PCS inspires inclusion within the union as well as across our workplaces.

Contact the PCS equality department at [equality@pcs.org.uk](mailto:equality@pcs.org.uk) to find out more about joining a regional or national equality members' network. We need to encourage more women, young, black, LGBT+ and disabled members to get active in the union.