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# **Award celebrates member's noisy Doncaster campaign**

PCS member Matt Meechan recently won Yorkshire and Humber TUC's Shop Steward of the Year award.

PCS member Matt Meechan won the Shop Steward of the Year award at Yorkshire and Humber TUC's 76th annual conference in Leeds at the weekend for his work while a rep in DWP Doncaster.

DWP had previously assured staff that back-office jobs at Crossgate House, Doncaster, were secure. So the announcement to transfer them to Sheffield was keenly felt. Faced with the challenges of extra commuting and changes to caring responsibilities, many accepted redundancy offers only for these to be withdrawn at the last minute.

"It felt like a betrayal," says Matt. "Staff had been ignored by DWP and desperately wanted to be heard. We were angry and we needed a voice. We were aiming to win – fighting for our lives in Doncaster.

"First, I took statements from members on the impact that the proposed move would have on them. Then I asked staff what they spent in nearby shops and got a conservative estimate of £500k a year. Local businesses put up our posters and this even got the support of Tory MP Nick Fletcher.

"My letter to MP Rosie Winterton won her backing too and we got MP Sir Steven Timms to raise the threatened closure in a select committee. Rosie visited three times to talk to members. We got support from two more MPs, from the local trades council, and from the town council after leafletting and demonstrating outside.

"The branch had fantastic support on the picket lines even in the depths of winter. It was dark, it was cold, but there was great camaraderie. We ran equality impact assessments. We had rallies and leaflets. Our PCS full time official Mark Page did a local radio interview. Using peoples' different strengths gave the campaign every possible angle and made it as noisy as possible."

Whilst the campaign didn't stop the jobs moving, Matt turned members into activists.

“Some of my former colleagues in Sheffield are now facing a forced 60% office attendance which would mean further transport and care challenges. Those members are going to be angry but I know they've got a great branch. I've left DWP but I'm still an ARMS member and I'm supporting any way I can.

If you also want to get more involved in PCS, speak to your rep or email [organising@pcs.org.uk](mailto:organising@pcs.org.uk).