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# Shadow defence minister commits to working with PCS

“My door is always open to you,” shadow minister for defence procurement Maria Eagle told our defence sector group conference.

Appearing as a guest speaker at the conference in Brighton today (21) said that as a trade union member she believed in a “proper partnership between government ministers and people actually doing the job in the defence sector.”

She admitted it’s not always easy to get information from the government about what was going on in the defence sector so engaging with PCS was crucial.

“There are many interests that we have in common and I hope we can work together and help each other,” she told delegates.

The minister said that defence secretary Grant Shapps plans to cut 72,000 civil service jobs to pay for a £75 billion increase in defence spending didn’t add up. She said that the Tories didn’t value the public sector or public services.

She said Labour was committed to “increasing the rights of people at work”.

She ruled out scrapping all anti-union legislation dating back to the 70s but committed to making it easier for unions to go into workplaces and recruit, remove unnecessary restrictions on them and increase protections for union reps.

## **Epidemic of bullying**

She praised PCS for being at the forefront of highlighting and campaigning against a widespread culture of sexual assault, harassment and abuse at the Ministry of Defence. And she pledged to do “whatever it takes” to tackle harassment and bullying in the sector.

“We want to work with PCS as the union at the forefront of tackling this,” she said.

“There’s an epidemic of bullying and harassment at the MOD but the Tories are refusing to tackle it.”

She also said she saw no reason why Labour would continue the Tory policy of insisting civil servants attend workplaces 60% of the time.

When asked about bringing private sector contracts back in-house, she said: “We will look at it on a case-by-case basis. But we have much sympathy towards the idea of bringing things back in-house.”

She did say that a future Labour government would have to reform defence procurement, explaining that 45 of 52 procurement projects are not on time or in budget.

Defence sector group president Chris Dando thanked the MP for her commitment to working with PCS.

**Find out more about PCS annual delegate conference which starts at 2pm on [our dedicated web page](#) and follow the latest on social media with the hashtag #PCSADC**