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Activate: G4S strikers on their fight for better pay

Hear from outsourced security guards at DWP jobcentre sites on their current phase of strike action and why insourcing is the solution to many of their issues.

Hundreds of PCS members employed as jobcentre security guards by G4S at the DWP have been involved in a long-running pay dispute alongside colleagues in the GMB union.

During the [current round of strike action](#), member Stacey has attended every PCS picket line and made an effort to show solidarity with her striking colleagues in the GMB.

But what has led her to become more actively involved with the union?

“Knowing that we are fighting for a better work environment and better pay is the reason for me,” she says. “We put our lives on the line every day at work, never knowing what is going to happen that day or if we have the right equipment and support. We shouldn't have to work in fear that something bad can happen to us while we are on shift.”

When it comes to the techniques that Stacey and her colleagues have used to get members organised, she tells PCS that a WhatsApp group chat has kept members engaged, informed, and connected to one another.

“Between the PCS and the GMB we have multiple sites on a group chat and we are constantly talking,” she says. “We regularly update the group chats with new information: things that have happened on a site or what has been said within the site.”

‘A fairer deal’

Impressed by the work of PCS reps and staff, who he says “are helping to change people’s lives”, Martin decided to take his involvement to a new level and become an advocate.

Prior to the strike action, he would encourage new starters to join PCS by “trying to make them understand what the union could do for them as far as representation and what they would represent them for, as well as why they should get involved”.

He has consistently attended picket lines over the past two months, acting as the unofficial “light entertainment” and “beverage organiser” for his fellow strikers; creating a positive atmosphere, he remarks, is “definitely needed as pickets are something to be enjoyed while you try to make your statement”.

“I would say to any outsourced workers that we are people, too,” he says. “We are not animals. We have a right to voice our opinions and a right to fight for a fairer deal.”

According to Martin, a rapid increase in membership (from less than 200 to over 400 since the launch of this campaign) needs to be built upon further, but the ultimate goal is to be brought back in-house, a key manifesto commitment of the new Labour government.

For him personally, insourcing would allow him to become a PCS rep. As he points out, better health and safety protections, improved pay, and better leave entitlements are not the only potential benefits of insourcing: “Even before the strike action, outsourcing has been shown to fail in the form of shortfalls in staffing.”

Another member, Mo, has been excited by the organising taking place in his workplace by PCS. He has been particularly impressed with the regular updates provided by WhatsApp and over Zoom meetings, as well as the support of PCS staff and reps to “encourage me to get more involved”.

“I have been regularly talking to my G4S colleagues as to why they should be with PCS and how active they are in keeping members informed,” he says.

Does he agree with Stacey and Martin that his role should be insourced?

“I believe the security department with DWP should be insourced to protect the rights of employees and guarantee contractual rights,” he says. “But mainly, why should public funds be spent on a private firm for profit making?”

Outsourced workers in London and the South-East can register for a PCS course called [Workplace Reps: Essential Building Blocks \(outsourced FM workers only\)](#). This training course will take place in PCS HQ in Clapham Junction in London and will last for six days on 1, 2, 3, 15, 16 and 17

October.