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Strikers going strong, and going another round

The mood on picket lines last week at DWP sites was joyful and ever more determined, despite the ongoing dispute.

PCS members working as security guards at DWP sites and jobcentres are underpaid and poorly treated by their employer G4S. They and their colleagues in GMB union have been on strike every other week since 17 June.

These exploited workers risk their safety every day serving the public. Their determination and courage shows through in the mood at picket lines, with plenty attending and lots of public support. At Walthamstow, for example, where the jobcentre was forced to close, picketers' morale was boosted by a steel drum band. They kept the chants going all morning: "We're worth more than £11.44".

A mass picket in Newcastle on Thursday 1 August saw the staff there joined by strikers from Teesside for a rally with support from the local bishop who shared the cathedral facilities. More vibrant pickets were found at Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Sheffield and Grimsby. DWP staff working in jobcentres have been showing great support and solidarity, bringing G4S members tea, cakes and sandwiches. They agree it's time to bring this contract in-house.

One PCS striker said, "We get just above the minimum wage and have to deal with physical and verbal abuse every day. The government must bring the jobs back in-house and give us the same conditions as civil service staff."

Another told us: "Together we are strong. We are real people, proud of what we do to help people. But we have suffered stress strokes, arthritis, physical and mental health issues. We and our families are suffering so we're striking to end poverty."

What's next?

There is no let-up in the fight for fair pay and the security guards will walk out again in the weeks commencing August 12 and 26.