

Focus on voting in the national ballot

If we are going to get the victory on pay and pensions our members deserve, it starts by returning a strong result in our consultative ballot which runs until **21 March**.

With voting open in our [national ballot](#) of 150,000 public sector workers, the coming weeks are absolutely crucial. We want as many members as possible to take part in the ballot to strengthen our position in talks with the government, the Treasury and employers.

Our demands are:

- A 10% cost-of-living rise.
- A living wage of £15 an hour.
- A significant reduction in the working week with no loss of pay.
- A better qualification for 35 days of annual leave.
- A return to national civil service bargaining on pay and terms and conditions.
- Reduction in pension contributions of 2% backdated to 2019.

Working people across the country are affected by the cost-of-living crisis and there are lots of unions that are taking action or plan on doing so. The potential for joint union action is enormous and the next few months provide the perfect opportunity to heap massive pressure on the government.

The first step if you are a PCS public sector member in the ballot is to **vote yes**. You should by now have received your digital ballot paper sent from pcs@cesvotes.com to your personal email if we have it, or by post if we haven't. Click on the link in that email to vote.

It is really important you **vote yes** to the 2 questions:

- Do you agree with the union's demands on pay and pensions?
- And are you prepared to take industrial action, if the government, the Treasury and our employer don't listen?

This is not a strike ballot. A statutory industrial action ballot might follow later.

No ballot paper?

If you have not received an email with your voting link, request a replacement by emailing balloting@pcs.org.uk. The email **must** include your 8-digit membership number which starts with a “P” and can be found on any email you have received from PCS.

Check your spam/junk emails before requesting a replacement. The deadline for requesting a replacement is **noon on 11 March**.

New members who [join](#) before **5pm on Friday 4 March** will be included in the ballot automatically.

Scared and stressed

[Many members have described their struggles](#) as food and energy bills rise and inflation hits a 30-year high while their wages have stagnated for over a decade.

Sarah is having to make tough decisions: “I am now having to decide if I heat the house or feed myself.”

Disabled member Robert is scared and stressed about rising bills.

“I normally run out of money a week or two before payday,” he said. “I am scared about rising food and energy bills.”

He called on the government to “increase pay for all with at least at a rate equal to inflation”.

Gale says she runs out of money virtually every month.

“I’ve always just about managed to cover my bills but struggle with anything else and I feel stressed,” she said.

“I’ve found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet over the past decade and have to take a second job just to get by.”

[Financial struggles led apprentice Alistair](#) to give up his flat and move back in with his parents.

He explained why he has voted **yes** in the ballot: “I have voted to try and help make other apprentices feel that they are not just working to live. We deserve a decent pay rise.”

Unequal pay

Women make up the majority of our union while suffering disproportionately from low and unequal pay. It's vital that we urge all women members to vote in ballot.

As well as using their voice with a vote, we need more women to get involved in this campaign and the union as a whole. Despite 60% of PCS members being women, they are not fully represented in our democratic structures.

A report commissioned by PCS for the 2020 comprehensive spending review found that the gender pay gap in the civil service was 12% for annual pay and 10% for hourly pay. This means that women in the civil service effectively work for free until 20 March.

We believe that it is clear that pay delegation has also led to pay segregation by gender; and that the gender pay gap can be reduced by increasing the pay of the lowest-paid workers.

In addition to a [10% rise and other demands](#), PCS's national pay claim is calling for the way civil service pay is negotiated to be simplified. The government has designed a system that means there are 200 separate sets of talks for different areas. This has led to a deeply unfair, unequal and discriminatory situation that hits women badly, as well as other groups of workers.

[Scottish Prison Service worker Lorna](#), who is active in the PCS National Women's Forum (NWF) and a branch rep in PSG Scotland said that most of the lowest-paid workers in her workplace are women.

"I don't think many of our women members quite realise the power they could have. They are such a large part of the union. Women have been left behind for so long," she said.

She urged women to vote in the ballot and help PCS fight for equal pay with action.

"It would make all the difference to get the women's vote out in this ballot. There can sometimes be an assumption that you're being paid equally, without realising how much of a gap there is."

Our members have been lauded throughout the pandemic for their outstanding work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable people in society. And it is time the government, the Treasury and their employers rewarded them for their efforts through the most difficult times.

What members can do

We need members to:

- [Log into PCS Digital](#) to check their details are up to date so we can keep them informed about the campaign.
- Use the [PCS pensions robbery calculator](#) and share the results with their MP
- [Get active in PCS](#)
- Vote in the [digital ballot](#)
- Not a member? [Join online](#) before **5pm on 4 March** to get a vote.
- Not received an email from pcs@cesvotes.com with your voting link?
Contact balloting@pcs.org.uk. The email **must** include your 8-digit membership number which starts with a "P" and can be found on any email you have received from us. Check your spam/junk folder before getting in touch.