



[1 February Strike Blog](#)

1 February 2023

100,000 PCS members take part in national strike

Read what's happening as PCS members have been taking strike action and holding picket lines, marches and rallies. We will be posting regular updates throughout the day.

- [Read why our members are striking.](#)
- [Look at the different ways you can support the strikers.](#)

Support us on social media with the hashtags: **#PCSonStrike #BlameTheGovt**

Got a strike report from your picket line? Email a summary with any highlights and photos and videos to strikereports@pcs.org.uk or via Whatsapp to 07564112320

If you're a member taking action, [read our essential information](#) and [our Q&A](#).

[Donate to the PCS strike fund](#)

There are hundreds of picket lines, [see what's happening in your area](#). There are also [rallies involving lots of other unions](#). You can see both combined on [our lovely map](#).

Send messages of support and solidarity to those on strike by emailing editor@pcs.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter [@pcs_union](#) for many more picket line pictures and updates. The hashtag #PCSonStrike is currently trending in the UK.



Members outside the Cabinet Office in central London



The picket line at ONS in Newport, Wales



in Hull

Picket line pooches watching the sunrise in Newport where strikers were joined by "Terry the tiger" from Prospect.



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Official Picket at DFE Midlands Branch



Officially our most northerly picket line! HM Coastguard members in Shetland.

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The PCS picket lines started early this morning and members from the **Border Force** were out in the dark braving the cold in **Hull** at 4:30am.

Messages of support have been coming in from across the world, with the India Labour Solidarity [Tweeting their support](#) for the 1 February strikes and a [workers' organisation in Turkey Tweeting](#) "We hope your action will be successful and give inspiration to all workers around the world."

Closer to home, **West of England Metro Mayor, Dan Norris** sent a message to say "I appreciate the real depth of emotion that has led to this strike action.....The country is suffering through the fastest fall in wages recorded and workers are entitled to fair pay."

Fiona, a rep for Prospect union said "I want to offer my support for the industrial action today by many public sector workers and immediate colleagues. I am a rep for Prospect and we are currently balloting for Industrial Action too. Our collective voices are powerful & I hope our efforts will be successful. Good luck with your action."

Matt Wrack, general secretary of the FBU, Tweeted "Solidarity with @pcs_union members on strike today". **John McDonnell MP, chair of the PCS parliamentary group**, visited the PCS picket line at Heathrow and [tweeted a solidarity message](#). Meanwhile our general secretary, **Mark Serwotka**, has been visiting picket lines this morning and been interviewed on the BBC, ITV, [Sky News](#)

and the Jeremy Vine show on Channel 5.

At **Bromley** driving test centre, the two pickets there said "Hoping even the two of us at Bromley makes us and our cause more visible. We either fight for our cause or sit back and accept what the government choses to do with us." Other picket lines are varying from two members to over 30 pickets and supporters.

On the picket line at **Hove** JCP, Darren is one of 4 young members who joined PCS in the last week. He says "We are extremely worried that closing Hove Job Centre this year is ripping the heart out of the community. Claimants can't afford to go up to 5 miles to the new site in **Brighton**, and local businesses will struggle without the custom of us as staff."

Reports of the strike's impact are already coming in. In EFRA South West and South Wales, 100 members are out, leading to a reduced service, with the business not able to respond to customer queries across Defra Group. In the Senedd Commission at **Ty Hywel**, 200 members are out and Senedd business has been cancelled for the day.

The passport office in **Newport** is empty and passport processing will be delayed.

At DWP **Derbyshire**, 200 members are out and the managers aren't covering the work as they are all too busy watching the pickets!

#PCSonStrike is trending on Twitter. Have a look at [@pcs_union](https://twitter.com/pcs_union)

Big turnout at **Home Office, Waterside in Leeds**, where around 200 members are on strike on blustery picket line along a busy main road. Lots of public support and honks from passing Royal Mail vans and the public, with asylum decision-making disrupted.

Watch PCS General Secretary Mark Serwotka's video message to our strikers.

Great turnout at the Disclosure and Barring Service in Liverpool, with 350 staff on strike.

Lots of great photos and video on [the PCS Facebook page](#), have a look, give us a like and send us your messages of support.

Breaking news

Our strikes are having an impact, **The British Museum** is completely closed to the public with around 80 PCS members on strike.

This is the message on their website:

"Due to industrial action on Wednesday 1 February, the Museum has taken the decision to close today. This is not a decision taken lightly and we apologise for any inconvenience this may cause."

At the Home Office, Vulcan House in **Sheffield**, 10 members have been on the picket line with a new rep recruited and very few staff in the office.

DWP South Humberside branch reports well-supported action with the number of staff crossing picket lines minimal. And excellent support from the public. Managers have been tied up for 2 hours 'babysitting' picket lines. Sadly the wind versus PCS flags competition ended Wind 2, PCS flags 0.

Massive solidarity

We've had lots of solidarity messages coming in.

PCS Parliamentary Group chair **Chris Stephens** said: "PCS members who are striking today are inspiring millions of others to fight for fair pay and pension justice. This is a just strike. Keep fighting, enough is enough. The government can't keep treating people this way. You're owed 10%. Good luck everybody, stand up and fight."

Fellow MP Kate Osborne joined 3 of 500 PCS picket lines taking place across the country.

She said: "I'm in solidarity with you, fighting for better pay, terms and conditions and pensions. You'll always see me on a picket line."

MP Nadia Whittome was full of praise for our strikers: "Massive solidarity to every PCS member striking today.

"Civil servants are among those essential workers who keep our society running. It's not millionaires and billionaires."

She said our members deserve to be paid properly and have proper conditions at work.

"Today the whole of the union movement is standing united, we're not going to be divided by this Tory government, or by employers. Keep demanding better and keep going," she added.

Musician Dan Donnelly of The Levellers showed his support at the DWP City of **Sunderland** picket.

Send messages of support and solidarity to those on strike by emailing editor@pcs.org.uk

Why we are on strike

PCS members having been sharing why they are on strike today.

Alice Booth, a rep at the **Cabinet Office** told us: "I'm here today because we deserve a 10% pay rise.

"We deserve a pay rise that is in line with inflation. And I'm so happy to see so many workers out across the country today. Victory to all of us. We deserve to be treated fairly and this government just has to listen to us."

Chris Marks, a **DWP** rep, spoke to us outside Caxton House in London sent solidarity to "all the rest of the PCS pickets out today, as well as colleagues in the NEU, Aslef, and the UCU."

Disruption

There are reports of DWP services being affected by our action. Appointments have been cancelled at **Warrington** jobcentre. And there were no appointments at **Leigh** jobcentre, with appointments also cancelled at a cold and windy **Widnes** jobcentre, while at **Torquay** jobcentre many diaries were closed and essential appointments were prioritised.

At the **Manchester** airport picket where there has been targeted action, there was support from passengers on the line just outside terminal 3 arrivals.

One office was closed and courts amalgamated, with senior managers doing junior roles, as 90% are out at **Dundee** Sherriff Court.

Only about 20 out of more than 400 staff are in at **Defra**, Lancaster House in **Newcastle**. The virtual call centre for the Rural Payments Agency has been impacted. Defra, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation and RPA's operations have been impacted from members not being at work.

At the port of **Newhaven**, the army has been called in to do passport checks with Border Force officers on strike.

Superb picket lines and impact

Kate from DfE Sheffield said "the picket line was huge. I've been a rep for many years and we've had nothing as big. Members from all grades, apprentices to managers. There was such a great vibe we all stayed until past 11am. We had flag twirling, dancing to Steps, and loud and passionate mass singing with our own versions of Pet Shop Boys and Human League classics. Absolutely superb."

At the Scottish Government site at Atlantic Quay in Glasgow it was the strongest picket line support in the branch's history. For many, the first time attending a picket line. At a time when many members are working from home, lots of members made the journey in to specifically support, and stand with, the picket line. The branch covers 11 sites and at least three offices were closed, with an impact on delivery of support to Scottish Government Ministers and benefit delivery.

At Blackburn, **Rochdale** and Hemel Hempstead Jobcentres PCS strikers were joined by striking teachers from the NEU on the picket line. CWU members delivering the mail and driving post vans have refused to cross our picket lines at many sites.

Hull jobcentre estimated 80% of staff were out. At one point eight management staff were at the entrance ensuring staff who wanted to cross the picket line could, but this was causing its own disruption. There were so many managers there that they were blocking the entrance and delaying the staff getting in!

At **National Galleries Scotland**, in **Edinburgh**, the building was closed with limited security and 1000 people rallied outside.

****Update on Manchester Airport**** – the military were covering primary controls but we have had reports of errors, including incorrect endorsements given to travel documents and counterfeits being allowed through.

DVSA **Musselburgh** Driving Test Centre said all tests were cancelled and there was superb support from passing motorists.

At the Department for Education in Sanctuary Buildings, London, 300 members were out, equating to 80%. One floor was completely closed, with not even the lights on. And apparently there was no one to go and buy the Minister's lunchtime

sandwich! TUC general secretary Paul Nowak and Chris Stephens MP were on the picket line, which the government's Education Minister Gillian Keegan crossed.

Media

The local press, TV and radio stations have visited many of our pickets lines and interviewed members. In **Liverpool**, DWP North Liverpool reps Moe and Geoff were [interviewed by the Liverpool Echo](#).

[The Mirror](#) interviewed Cabinet Office member Elliie Clarke this morning. She told them: "It is really, really hard. I am terrified every day. I am always worried I am one crisis away from homelessness.

"I am just one pay cheque away from being homeless. We shouldn't be in this situation... we are working for the Government."

Photographers Phil Rees in Wales and Timm Sonnenschein in **Birmingham** have been out covering picket lines today. Timm took some picture of PCS president Fran Heathcote visiting picket lines and talking to members in Birmingham.

[Listen to Fran's interview with BBC West Midlands](#)



Pickets outside Audit Wales - picture courtesy Phil Rees



Outside the Senedd building in Cardiff - photo courtesy Phil Reese



Birmingham - photo



Sonnenschein

Holding the line in Birmingham - photo courtesy Timm Sonnenschein

Marches and rallies

After doing their bit on the picket lines, PCS members have taken part in rallies and demonstrations in towns and cities, many joining up with other unions on strike today. There has also been a large amount of support from the public.

At the rally in Leeds, Mohamed Shafiq, chair of the PCS national black members' committee, and NEC members, received a cheque for £500 for our strike fund from Leeds Trades Council.

Around 5,000 people joined union members and supporters joined a march in **Bristol** and hundreds gathered for a lively rally in **Truro**.

DWP rep Catherine was [interviewed by BBC Radio Cornwall](#). She explained the support from the public on picket lines was astounding.

"People are recognising we are doing this because we have no other choice because people have had enough," she said. "We were clapped throughout the pandemic and now we want some kind of recognition and reward. Claps won't feed the 40,000 members of PCS using foodbanks."

There was a sizeable group of PCS strikers on the march in central London, ending in a rally addressed by Mark Serwotka and other union leaders.

[The Mirror](#) reported that Regent Street in London was blocked by the number of marchers, that the march in Nottingham also closed a lane of traffic as it marched towards the city's Albert Hall and that the rally in Leeds had attracted over 1000 people.



A home made banner from Glasgow showing public sector pay against the cost of living.



Assembling to march in Glasgow



and for the occasion.

The Brighton and Hove rally had all the colours of the rainbow.



SLEF and the NEU (National

Leeds Trades Council donated £500 to our strike fund and presented Mohammed Shafiq with the giant cheque.



In Bristol the pickets carried the traditional regional banner to the rally.

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