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Going from strength to strength in Scottish Government

Keith looks at the 48% increase in PCS membership across the Scottish Government group, how they've achieved it and the impact of the 1 February strike action.

The Scottish Government group, also known as Scotland's Whitehall, includes around 18 different bodies. covering a very diverse range of roles.

PCS membership in the group was around 3900 at the end of 2021, and around 5700 at the end of 2022, a **48% increase**.

The whole organisation grew significantly between 2016 and 2022 in response to Brexit, the pandemic and transfers of powers to Holyrood, but also because of the phased devolution of social security.

2022 saw the largest recruitment of staff to Social Security Scotland (SSS) to allow the launch and administration of ADP and CDP – the Scottish equivalents of PIP for adults and children with disabilities.

Some of the increase came from members transferring in from other employers such as DWP and HMRC (often saving jobs after office closures) but the vast majority of the growth was through new staff members.

Growth in the organisation does not automatically lead to a growth in union membership however. It is testament to the hard work of our reps in SSS and across the Scottish Government, doing inductions and recruitment, despite most staff still working from home, that they were able to recruit such significant numbers of new members.

Before Covid most of our branches did regular stalls and in-person events but given most of our staff are still working from home, these are less regular. We have however done a lot of online members' meetings and events since the pandemic and are beginning to run hybrid events, so a mix of online and in person.

As a group we are very visible and active, carrying out inductions where possible, having advocates in workplaces, noticeboards and general visibility and good comms with the members. This is key to the growth in membership.

PCS membership within the Scottish Government group is continuing to grow and since the start of 2023 membership has increased again by around 10%. Many of the recent new joiners are long-standing non-members and those keen to take part in the 1 February action.

On 1 February we had some huge picket lines across our sites, with all of our branches pulling out the stops. I think we must have had close to 500 people on our picket lines across the country. Not far off 10% of our membership on picket lines!