

PCS Branch Learning Fund

Run learning events to build member power and participation in your workplace

The PCS Branch Learning Fund exists to encourage branches (and groups) to run regular learning events for your members.

Worker education and lifelong learning has always been a core part of trade union activity. All union learning should promote solidarity and collective action.

The sessions below can all be used, directly or indirectly, to achieve these two goals, by:

- Raising PCS's profile and making your workplace a 'PCS workplace'
- Attracting those 'hard-to-reach' members who don't vote in ballots or attend members meetings
- Increasing participation of women, black and other under-represented members
- Providing a pathway into activism
- Contributing to achieving your branch/group's bargaining, organising and equality objectives
- Recruiting non-members.

How do you choose the right session?

The key is identifying sessions which members want to attend and which can be used to build worker power and participation.

This will vary by employer. DWP members on the minimum wage, higher grade members in a Whitehall department, or Met Police PCSOs are likely to have different interests.

For example:

- Is sexual harassment, bullying or stress a current workplace issue? Book a session on one (or all) of these subjects.
- Do you have low union density and/or member engagement? Run a survey to find out what subjects members are interested in, then book a session.
- Are your members facing organisational change, office closures or redundancy? Book one or more of our 'employability' sessions to help

members apply and be interviewed for a new job, as part of your campaign.

- Do you have an ageing membership? Book one of our pensions sessions or pre-retirement sessions for older members, and run a pensions for younger members to help build a new generation of members and activists.

[How do you book a tutor?](#)

1. Have a look at the available sessions listed below.
2. Discuss with your branch committee which subject your branch should run.
3. Email learningacademy@pcs.org.uk to request the session and book the tutor. Requests should be submitted by your ULR or Branch Learning Coordinator, where these are in post. Please include the following information:
 1. Your name and branch
 2. Which session you wish to run
 3. How you will use it to build PCS in your workplace, branch or group.
 4. If you want to run the session on a particular date or week, let us know.

We are moving away from using the [request form](#) although this will still be monitored.

Available sessions

Email learningacademy@pcs.org.uk to request a trade union tutor to deliver any of the sessions listed below.

Duration Sessions last **1 hour**, except where stated.

Format All are delivered **online** - some can also be delivered **in-person**.

Post-event resources You'll be provided with the tutor's slides and other resources mentioned for emailing to attendees, plus dates of any relevant upcoming PCS courses you can signpost attendees to.

[Climate crisis](#)

GREEN WORKPLACES AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

A short introduction to climate change, what 'climate justice' is, and why trade unions have a crucial role to play in fighting for it. *Trade union tutor.*

[Black history](#)

BLACK HISTORY

Black histories are a vital part of Britain's story, reaching back many centuries. Each session uncovers a different leader or aspect of black history. Learn about [William Cuffay](#) and many other Black Britons. *Tutor: Ken Olende.*

[Fair and healthy workplaces: Equality](#)

*These are all **taster** sessions, designed to signpost members to PCS's longer one- and two-day courses on the same subject, generating new activists and Advocates. All content is from a trade union perspective, and explores how these topics are workplace issues, and the union role in tackling them.*

All presenters are leading trade union tutors who deliver existing PCS Academy courses.

RACISM AND INTOLERANCE

The current threat by the far-right to our workplaces and communities, and constructive ways we can counter these threats as trade unionists.

NEURODIVERSITY

An introduction to neurodiversity, whether it's autism, dyslexia, or another atypical condition. And the union role in improving workplace conditions for neurodiverse people.

MENOPAUSE

Understanding the symptoms of menopause, and workplace factors which may negatively impact on women workers experiencing the menopause, including potentially discriminatory practices.

COMBATting DOMESTIC ABUSE

An insight into domestic abuse, and how you can support colleagues or family/friends experiencing domestic abuse and violence.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The law and sexual harassment, policies and practices, challenging workplace cultures which tolerate harassment, and organising around equality.

WOMEN IN PCS: PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN WORKERS

To build the capacity of women members to progress in their careers and lives, and to overcome structural obstacles to making progress. To increase women's participation in PCS.

WOMEN AND VOTING

The history of how women fought for and won the vote. Can be linked to increasing women members' participation in PCS ballots.

TRANS EQUALITY

What do we mean by “trans”? Transitioning, the law, Gender Recognition Certificates, and more.

[Fair and healthy workplaces: Wellbeing](#)

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BULLYING

Spot bullying behaviours, start to define the ways that bullying can manifest itself, understand why bullying is a trade union issue.

STRESS

PCS reps spend a huge amount of time supporting individual members and collectively organising around workload and staffing. No to 'resilience' and yes to PCS members standing together to reduce harmful stress at work.

ASSERTIVENESS

We all have a right to express our thoughts, feelings, and needs, as long as we do so in a respectful way. Techniques and strategies to develop these skills, and to establish more effective personal boundaries.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Are we really in the middle of a 'mental health crisis'? Or is the high demand for therapeutic services, prescriptions of anti-depressants, etc, actually evidence of the terrible impact of social ills, such as soaring costs and increasing debt, inequality, discrimination, bullying at work, and other collective problems in our society?

CANCER

Find out more about cancer in the workplace, its causes and effects. How to support members experiencing cancer-related ill-health, and PCS campaigns to improve employer support for employees from diagnosis to rehabilitation, as well as for carers.

[Employability and support at work](#)

To support members wishing to move job, apply for a new job, or to achieve promotion.

This can include during a reorganisation, restructure, redundancies or office closures - requests must be in line with the PCS group policy (e.g. we wouldn't agree a session where PCS is opposing job cuts unless the branch/group confirms this will assist their collective campaign).

All tutors are from the WEA (Workers Educational Association), the largest voluntary provider of adult learning in England and Wales, with close links to the trade union and working-class movement.

APPLYING FOR A JOB IN THE CIVIL SERVICE - INTRODUCTION TO 'SUCCESS PROFILES'

90-minute webinar

An introduction to the civil service's 'success profile' recruitment and selection process. A packed session covers job adverts, Behaviours, Strengths, personal statements, evidence/STAR method. Examples are provided.

3 hour workshop

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APPLYING FOR A JOB IN THE CIVIL SERVICE - WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

2 hour workshop

Developed in response to member demand for a more in-depth focus on writing personal statements as part of the 'success profile' process in the civil service.

VALUE MY SKILLS

Participants are encouraged to identify their transferable skills - not just skills used at work, but in all aspects of our lives, as well as areas for development.

CV WRITING

How to create a CV for life, keeping it updated with lots of examples, making future applications easier and more effective, whether an employer asks for a CV or completion of an application form.

ASSERTIVENESS

We all have a right to express our thoughts, feelings, and needs, as long as we do so in a respectful way. Techniques and strategies to develop these skills, and to establish more effective personal boundaries.

[Pensions and Preparing for Retirement](#)

Pensions justice is one of the main demands in the [PCS national campaign](#) - and pensions is one of the most popular sessions in our learning programme.

Below are the current sessions you can book, together with sessions on the related subject of preparing for retirement.

UNDERSTANDING CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONS

1 hour 15 minutes

Short, introductory session covering some 'basics' of Civil Service Pensions: Alpha pension; the "McCloud" Remedy; Employee Contributions; Answering (or escalating) members' questions.

PCS Pensions Officer

PENSIONS FOR YOUNG WORKERS

Coming soon.

RETIREMENT AND PENSIONS EXPLAINED

90 minutes

More general focus on pensions and preparing for retirement, as well as covering Alpha. Helps members improve their chances of securing a comfortable retirement. How pensions work, when to retire, accessing additional savings, tax considerations and countering inflation.

Quilter (Lighthouse) financial advisor

PREPARING FOR RETIREMENT

0.5 days - webinar

1-2 days - workshop

The webinar and the workshop focus on the major legal, emotional, financial, tax, pensions and other key aspects of preparing for retirement. Also included, the benefits of joining PCS ARMs on retirement. Individuals can follow-up with a local independent financial advisor (for which they will be charged).

Amber River (True Bearing) independent financial advisors

Currently available in the following regions:

- *North West*
 - *Yorkshire & Humberside*
 - *Midlands*
 - *London and southeast pilot on 27 June*
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Cost-of-living crisis - financial wellbeing

*There's only one way to end the cost-of-living crisis, and that's through **collective** trade union action: political campaigning and strike action as part of the [PCS pay, pensions and jobs campaign](#).*

*However, **individual** support to members can be of real value in assisting hard-pressed members and their families during the current period.*

These popular sessions can also be run during industrial action ballots and when taking strike action to help 'get out the vote'.

NAVIGATING THE FINANCIAL SQUEEZE

Personal financial planning. A financial advisor helps members make the most of their money and improve their ability to secure their financial future.

Quilter (Lighthouse) independent financial advisor

RESOLVING PROBLEM DEBT

We all have debts: phones, cars, mortgages, credit cards. This session looks at how to avoid our debts becoming unmanageable - and what to do if they do become overwhelming. Non-judgemental, sympathetic and practical guidance from an experienced national debt advisor on budgeting, financial planning, and accessing confidential advice.

PayPlan national debt advisor

CREDIT UNION - ETHICAL SAVINGS & AFFORDABLE LOANS

Savings have a huge impact on our wellbeing and yet almost one-third of us have no emergency savings. How to join the PCS/CWU 1st Class Credit Union to access affordable loans whilst saving a small amount each month.

FINANCES FOR YOUNG WORKERS

Guidance and advice for younger members on building stable finances at the start of your working life, including guidance to first-time buyers (covers shared ownership).

Quilter (Lighthouse) independent financial advisor

Numeracy skills - financial wellbeing

Multiply is a fully-funded government scheme that offers numeracy and maths courses to adults aged 19 and over. According to research, around [17 million adults in England](#) – half of the working-age population – have the numeracy skills of primary school children.

Multiply-funded learning aims to boost adult numeracy skills in work and daily life, ranging from drop-in sessions to longer intensive courses.

TUC Skills Officers and Trade Union Units in further education colleges offer a wide range of Multiply-funded sessions.

Contact learningacademy@pcs.org.uk to be connected to a provider in your region or devolved nation.

A snapshot of what's available:

- Basic Numeracy: Initial Assessment
- Understanding your payslip
- Understanding your electricity and gas bills
- Budgeting your money
- Completing and returning a self-assessment tax return
- Working out time
- Saving money using Comparison websites
- Using an Excel spreadsheet to manage your money
- 50+ Ready for Change
- Harmful gambling - resources and support
- Murder, Mystery and Maths
- Creating healthy menus

and much more!

[IT and digital skills, and cyber security](#)

Run by tutors in the Trade Union Units of regional Further Education colleges.

INTRODUCTION TO EXCEL

2 hours

Further Education College tutor

IT SKILLS - LEVEL 1

0.5 days x 5 weeks

Introduction to file management, Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

Further Education College tutor

IT SKILLS - LEVEL 2

0.5 days x 5 weeks

Develop your skills in Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

[Writing for wellbeing, for work and creative writing](#)

WRITING FOR WELLBEING

1 hour x 4 weeks

This session provides a safe, creative and inclusive space for members to explore through poetry how writing can lift our spirits and improve our mood.

Professional writer

WRITING FOR SELF-EXPRESSION

90 minutes x 4 weeks

Self-expression plays a vital role in our mental wellbeing and confidence. These 90-minute weekly sessions provide an opportunity for participants to explore self-expression through reading, writing and conversation. The tutor shares texts as prompts for members to engage with their own experiences and feelings. Often,

thoughts which refuse to submit to understanding in our minds can achieve clarity once written down, and these sessions can be a process of revelation.

Professional writer from Royal Literary Fund (RLF)

LIFE WRITING

90 minutes x 6 weeks

Everyone's life is important, and we all have significant stories to tell.

The tutor helps participants find the words and language to engage with some of the meaningful experiences in their own life. Under the tutor's gentle guidance, members will be provided with literary and visual stimuli to generate their thoughts and memories. Using freewriting techniques, they will find ways to give voice and expression to their life's stories within a supportive creative environment. Words and writing can help us remember in a different, deeper, way.

Professional writer
