



[28 April Strike Blog](#)

28 April 2023

28 April Strike Blog

Our third national day of strike action will see more than **133,000** PCS members on strike.

Our blog brings you reports from picket lines and rallies across the UK.

Follow us on social media on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and use the hashtags #PCSonStrike #BlameTheGovt

Send picket line photos, videos and strike reports to editor@pcs.org.uk.

[Donate to the PCS Strike Fund](#)

Welcome to our live blog.

Our pickets have already been up bright and early, and the winner of first on the line today are the Border Force strikers at the Eurotunnel in **Folkestone** who have been out since **5am!**

There were other early pickets from our Home Office members, at the Port of **Dover** and Martello House in **Folkestone**.

Ahead of today's strike, PCS General Secretary Mark Serwotka accused the government of "[waging an ideological war on its own workforce](#)".

"When you look at how badly ministers treat their own staff, it's impossible not to think this is an ideological war on civil servants," he said.

"The evidence stacks up – ministers bullying their staff, giving our members the worst pay rise in the country, refusing to give them a back-dated pay claim or lump sum, like they've given everyone else, failing even to negotiate with us – so

how else do you explain it?"

[Read PA Media's preview of the strike.](#)

Striking for fair pay

One member who joined the MOJ **Scotland** branch picket line this morning explained why they are striking:

"I am an SEO, looking to buy a house and I am struggling to afford a decent house in a decent area. Or rather, I can afford the mortgage but that's about it. Ridiculous.

The Tories have voted to put their own wages up almost £20k since 2010. MPs claim they can't live on £80k. How do they expect AA/AO to live on £20k?

If the pay matched inflation and was fair there would be no strikes.

There are people who can't afford to take the time off and I would much rather not take the hit, but I would much prefer a decent pay for everyone. That's why I am happy to strike."

Breakfast round-up

It's been a very busy start to the day despite the wet weather in a lot of places, here are just some of the early risers we have heard from:

Picket lines at St Johns House **Bootle**, the Capital in **Liverpool**, DWP **Durham**, Scottish Government, Atlantic Quay, **Glasgow** – with Wanda the pooch joining in. **Leith** Jobcentre Plus, HMPO **Southport** and Trinity Bridge House in **Salford**.

Solidarity to you all, you are amazing.

Spirits are high in spite of the rain at Waterview Park in **Washington** where the strike is well supported and very few staff going into work and the car park almost empty.

Caroline and Catherine on one of our most southerly picket lines, outside **St Austell** UC Service Centre in **Cornwall** explained why they are striking: "We are standing up for our members, because in-work poverty is not acceptable. Our members want the pay they deserve."

That in-work poverty was highlighted earlier this week with the publication of the results of a PCS survey of DWP members which showed that [one in five workers](#)

[at the Department for Work and Pensions claim in-work benefits.](#)

Great to see HMRC members joining the national strike today. There is strong support at HMRC **Belfast** Erskine House.

Branch chair Kevin McNicholl said: "I'm proud to be with my colleagues who are taking a dignified stand against a brutal real-terms wage cut. Solidarity with all the thousands of workers in PCS and other unions fighting for a fair pay deal."

Photographer Andy Aitchison has been out and about in Westminster for



via interview outside 100

Pickets outside the Treasury at 1 Horse Guards Road in London



Pickets outside BEIS in London



Health and Social Care

Jocelyn outside the Department for Transport in Horseferry Road, London has a placard with a powerful message: fair pay for civil servants



Home Office pickets

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

Impact of action

Our strikes have hit the National Museums Scotland with the organisation's website reporting "access to some of our museums will be affected on Friday 28 April".

Some galleries and spaces at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, including the Doctor Who Worlds of Wonder exhibition, are closed. And the National Museum War Museum in Edinburgh is also closed for the day.

Many areas of service at the UK's largest HMRC office, Benton Park View in Newcastle, have been forced to run a skeleton service today, with a number of functions either reduced or suspended. The PCS branch is running 3 separate picket lines, at Main Gates, Ainthorpe Gate, and Vicar's Gate. This is the most comprehensive picket coverage in many years. The branch is laying on coffee and breakfast sandwiches at 9am for all official picketers and supporters.

The army has been called into cover at the port of Newhaven and Gatwick airport.

Appointments at Inverness Jobcentre appointments have been cancelled. The doors are closed, and only open for vulnerable customers.

Special message for Chloe

Strikers on the picket line outside the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology have tweeted an invitation to new secretary of state Chloe Smith, to "come down to our picket line outside and hear directly from your workers why we are on strike today".

Get your yes votes in

With [our industrial action rebalot](#) ongoing Carol on a picket on a picket line in Widnes has a measure for members who haven't yet voted:

"We must all vote again for strike action for the government to take us seriously. Get your yes votes in and demand a decent pay offer."

Solidarity with the strikers

Our strikers outside Law Society House, HMPO Belfast were joined by Gerry Carroll MLA for West Belfast, who said: "Proud to stand in solidarity again with PCS members taking strike action for fair pay, pensions and conditions. It's disappointing that the Tory government continue to disrespect their own workforce, with below inflation pay offer after years of real terms pay cuts."

Send your support to editor@pcs.org.uk

You can also support our striking members by making an [online donation to our strike fund](#).

[Complete our e-action](#), calling on your constituency MP to intervene with chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt.

Paul Nowak, general secretary of the TUC, visited the picket line this morning at Barnstaple jobcentreplus to talk to the pickets and help hold the banner.

And at the Passport Office in Wales the picket line was visited by member of the Welsh Senedd Owen Griffiths and also **Ruth Jones MP**, while **Chris Stephens MP** and **Alison Thewlis MP** visited the HMRC pickets in Glasgow.

The chair of **Carlisle Trades Union Council** visited the Defra picket line in Carlisle as well as members of Unite who brought along their banner and flags.

The National Union of Journalists has passed a motion this morning sending solidarity to striking PCS members.

Why I'm on strike

Striking members out on the picket lines have been telling us why they are taking strike action today.

Rachel from Cornwall Universal Credit Service Centre said: "I'm striking because life's getting harder and harder, and it's time we got the pay, respect and conditions we deserve."

Alice, from the Wallace Collection said: "I'm on strike today because I'm skint! It feels like however much you I work I'm constantly scraping by."

At **Vulcan House in Sheffield**, where today was their biggest picket line yet, Martin said: "It's either fight back or crawl back."

Media coverage

Our general secretary Mark Serwotka, national president Fran Heathcote and DWP group president Martin Cavanagh have all been doing the rounds this morning including LBC News and Times Radio and we have received a lot of media coverage.

[AOL previewed our strike](#) and also linked in mention of other public sector strikes, as did [The Irish News](#).

[Sky News](#) visited our HMRC picket line on Parliament Street in London and reported on the strike on their website.

[ITV News](#) reported on our strike action and quoted Mark Serwotka saying: "Ministers should be setting an example to employers, paying their own staff a fair wage, not leading the race to the bottom."

Further impact of solid strike action

The **British Museum and British Library** both issued messages to visitors warning that they were subject to closures and disruption due to our industrial action. At the British Museum entry is only be available to members and pre-booked ticket holders. The British Library's message said "due to planned industrial action by the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union, as part of a national dispute over pay, pension, jobs and redundancy terms. Some services will be limited, closed or close earlier than normal."

In Liverpool, five of the seven museums that make up **National Museums Liverpool** were closed.

Reports coming in show that the strike has been solid throughout, with very few members going into work. At the **Passport Office in Glasgow** there were only about 5 examiners in, which was a mixture of non-members and agency workers.

At **Gatwick and Stansted Airports and the port of Newhaven** it was reported that the army is covering for striking members, however they have only been trained to do the basics of the role.

Jobcentres up and down the UK are closed, appointments cancelled and managers are providing a skeleton cover, but in many cases just to open the office, not to provide a service to claimants.

"I'm out here because I want to make a difference."

Ollie, from Defra in Bristol said : "I'm on strike today because I see first hand the impact that the real-term pay cuts are having on our junior members of staff. I work with and speak to them often in my role as a rep and I'm out here because I want to make a difference."

Stan from the Office of Rail and Road told us: "I'm on strike today to fight for fair pay for all of my union colleagues who provide really important public services and whose pay has been absolutely trashed in the last ten years."

Isaac at HMRC simply said: "I'm on strike because I think that wages should keep up with the cost of living."

B.



DWP

Toxteth jobcentre in Liverpool standing strong



in Bristol



the Wallace Monument in



Picket line style at the Belfast docks.



Registers of Scotland members

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

Many members will soon be going from the picket lines to [strike rallies](#). Many are being held jointly to also commemorate Workers' Memorial Day, which is today.

Determined to keep going on strike - Mark Serwotka

Mark spoke to LBC News from the DVLA picket line in Swansea this morning and said: "Our members are on strike today because they are very angry that the government seems to have singled out its own workforce for the worst treatment of anybody in the public sector or across the British economy.

"Every single part of life, from cradle to grave, requires a civil servant to do something for the public and yet the government has given their own workforce 2% last year, the lowest pay rise anywhere in the public sector. It has only offered 4.5% in 2023, its own workforce are the only workers they are not negotiating with and we are the only part of the public who have not been offered any backdated pay award or lump sum to compensate for the chronic cost-of-living crisis.

"And we're determined to keep going on strike until the government recognises its own workforce and pays them a decent wage."

Site "like a ghost town"

PCS President Fran Heathcote visited the picket lines at Europe's largest civil service site at **Benton Park View** and described the site as "like a ghost town" with so many staff on strike.

"We're really pleased that the action has held up so well, it's solidly supported," she said.

The branch has recruited 100 new members following the announcement this week of [strategic strike action at the site next month](#). You can [sign up for PCS online](#)



Multiple flags and the PCS balloon at the strike rally opposite Downing Street. Photo by Andy Aitchison.

More than 1,000 PCS strikers turned out for a strike rally in **London** opposite Downing Street where PCS Deputy President Martin Cavanagh and MP John McDonnell addressed the crowd.

Martin told the crowd: "We're here for what you deserve, we're here for what you've earned. And we won't ain't going to stop until we've got it.

"What you're doing today isn't just protesting — what you're doing today is sending a clear and unequivocal message to the UK government and every government department: that we are not beaten, that we are not cowed, that we are not conned by the Treasury remit. We're going to carry on comrades, it's how we're going to get what we deserve.

"What we have delivered over the last six months is sustained targeted action across all departments, worker after worker withdrawing their labour with the same aim. The aim of undoing of 20 years of pay restraint. Not 12 months, but 20 years. 20 years of underfunding government departments, staff not being replaced when they leave, refusals to have proper recruitment, and when it is, it's not on a permanent basis."

John, a long-term PCS ally, told the crowd: "MPs have just had a pay rise mine is going straight into the PCS strike fund."

"There are some members of parliament who don't consider it the role of MPs to be on picket lines or speaking at demonstrations. But the role of a Labour MP is to be on every picket line we can in support of workers."

"This is your struggle but it is also the struggle of the whole trade union movement."

"The common cause [of all unions] is the attack that this government has waged for 13 years on our public services. Some of you won't believe this, but for a century and a half, we had governments of all political colours that accepted if a government wants to govern effectively, it needed a civil service that was professional and well trained, but also properly rewarded with decent pay and decent conditions and, yes, decent pensions. But for the last 13 years, we've had a government that's ransacked our country, that's sold off our public assets, that's exploited workers. And they've turned on their own workforce."

"You're the heroes and heroines, fighting, yes, for decent wages and conditions but also you're fighting for the principle of public services being administered professionally and effectively. That means being able to recruit and retain the professionals that you are."

Gary, who works for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (formerly BEIS), is at the rally and explained why he is on strike:

"I'm on strike today because below inflation pay rises have been going on for years. You can see the civil service being ground down. You can see people leaving the service and morale is really, really low. For me, a lot of it is about solidarity. I'm lucky enough to have a quite a good job in London and know that that is not the case across the country. There are people on the frontline across the country who get a fraction of what I do. When you hear that people are on minimum wage, and some are using foodbanks, it's outrageous. Unless we all fight together, we're not going to get any change. Public sector workers

nationwide have reached their limit. They can't take it anymore."

PCS President Fran Heathcote spoke at a rally in **Durham** and paid tribute to all members who have taken action in our dispute and in particular our Passport Office members who are currently taking 5 weeks of action and picketing in all weathers.

"PCS members are not going away and we will have our voices heard, among so many other working people who are standing together to say that enough is enough.

"Our members are angry and have had enough. In our current reballot we're determined to not just beat the threshold but to absolutely smash it and send the strongest message to this government that now is the time to pay up."

The PCS rally in **Nottingham** heard from from NEC speakers Ian Lowther and Paul Williams along with MP Nadia Whittome.

Nadia said: "When the Bank of England tells people to accept being poorer, they mean low-paid workers. Not the super-rich who have never been richer than today. Workers are right to be fighting back."

A number of unions gathered to mark Workers' Memorial Day in **Cardiff** hosted by former PCS Wales Secretary, now Wales TUC General Secretary Shavanah Taj, and among others, including guest speaker Mark Drakeford, First Minister for





London rally. Photo by



PCS strike rally in Bristol



MP John McDonnell addresses the crowd at the PCS rally in London. Photo by Andy Aitchison.

[Previous](#) [Next](#)