

Defending Trade Union Rights

PCS has a history of defending trade union rights, including the right to join a trade union.

Protecting the right to strike

The previous Tory government rushed through laws which would effectively criminalise strike action for thousands of our Home Office members, including border security staff and an unknown number of workers in the Passport Office.

Even though the UK already had the most restrictive trade union laws in Western Europe, The Strike (Minimum Service Levels) Act would limit the impact of a strike by forcing workers to maintain a level of service through the use of minimum service levels (MSLs).

The laws say that when workers lawfully vote to strike in certain sectors, including health, education, transport and border security, they could be forced to attend work – and sacked if they do not comply.

These anti-strike laws are also an authoritarian crackdown on the [human right to take industrial action](#).

Judicial review

At the march and rally in Cheltenham on 27 January to mark the 40th anniversary of the ban on trade union membership at GCHQ, PCS's then general secretary Mark Serwotka announced that [PCS would use the Human Rights Act to challenge the Strikes \(Minimum Service Levels\) Act 2023](#) on the grounds that the proposed strike restrictions contravene the right to strike enshrined in Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Repeal of the law

The [Labour government announced on 6 August 2024 that the Strikes Act 2023 will be repealed](#) through the Employment Rights Bill, which will be introduced within the first 100 days of the new government to "strengthen the rights of working people."

History of defending trade union rights

[Follow our timeline](#) to learn about the GCHQ union ban, which is relevant to our own resistance today to continuous attacks on trade union rights.