



[Sue Webb](#)

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Women activists: supporting each other and capable of anything

For Women's History Month Sue tells her story of how getting active in the union changed her life - and how she still has another challenge to meet.

I joined the civil service in 1983 aged 18. At that time, the Prison Service was a male-dominated work environment and women worked mainly in admin roles. Additionally, I was raised in a military family, also male-dominated, moving regularly, and as a result, female friendships were short-lived with few strong female role models in my world. My feminist politics were found reading Spare Rib Magazine and the Guardian, social media did not exist back then!

I joined the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) (later PCS) and within a month I became local rep at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, was on the branch executive committee within six months and then eventually the Home Office SEC.

Life changing

My life changed and I started to meet strong, independent women activists and male allies at all levels of the union. My confidence grew significantly during that time as a result. My biggest inspiration was always at annual delegate conference, listening to women delegates get up to speak on motions. The thought of going up to the rostrum in front of hundreds of delegates terrified me though, I didn't feel good enough, I had imposter syndrome - but each year I regretted not doing so.

I moved to Norwich in 2001 when I had my daughter. Post-natal depression, social isolation and early menopause severely impacted my confidence when I returned

to work, and sadly, I did not return to PCS branch work until five years ago. I am now HMPPS national branch vice chair, a position that sees me negotiating and engaging directly with HMPPS on behalf of members. I know that I'm good at it! My life has changed for the better again as a result. I am pleased to say we now have a number of new strong women activists on the BEC as well.

Rise to the challenge

It is never too late to be active as a woman in PCS. My regret is I didn't do it sooner the second time around. As women activists we must support each other, together we are capable of anything. My personal challenge is still to overcome my fears and speak at conference before I retire. What is your personal challenge?