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# Standing united

Paul, a PCS member working for DVSA, explains why he is taking strike action.

I have recently returned to the DVSA after eight years working in mental health and social justice. I am therefore classed as a new entrant and am in my probation period, although I actually passed my new entrant's course back in 2003 and spent 11 years with the agency then.

Coming back to the agency after eight years away initially brought some mixed feelings. I was returning to a job that I genuinely enjoyed. I would again be working with the public and with valued and respected colleagues. Together we would be upholding the integrity of the organisation and promoting safe driving across the UK, whilst maintaining professional standards.

However, I have come back to be offered only a two-year contract, with conditions distinct from that of my previous contract. Another concern was the pay, which didn't seem to have increased by much in eight years, particularly when you look at the current rate of inflation.

Having now worked in the job for just over two months, I sense that morale within the DVSA is at an all-time low. Having received my first month's pay I can see why. I am now concerned about the choice that I have made to return. The only option that I have, if I want to stay in this career, is to stand united with the members of our union. PCS has real concerns about our conditions, has captured our voice, and taken this 'to the table', representing us all at a ministerial level. PCS is also trying to support us financially during this strike. That's why I have re-joined PCS, for representation, solidarity and for our voice to be heard.

We are not asking for much, but we are being told by our government to accept a pay increase well below inflation, and to continue working within an unsettled environment. This does nothing for morale, or for our mental health.

Like so many of my colleagues, going on strike is always a last resort and not a decision taken lightly. It is even more difficult when you are a new entrant, still going through a probation period. Striking brings with it many personal emotions and trepidation. However, I believe that if we stand together in solidarity with PCS

we are presenting a true, united voice. By doing so our conditions could improve to that of an acceptable standard. We can remain in a career that we love so dearly, and the morale and environment can flourish.