



# NATIONAL ORGANISING STRATEGY 2019

**BUILDING > GROWING > WINNING**



## FOREWORD



The 2019 National Organising Strategy is effectively year two of the three year strategy agreed at last year's conference to take the union to the end of 2020.

PCS continues to grow as a union, attracting new members so that we are beginning to arrest

membership decline, increasing participation amongst our membership base, and strengthening our influence in membership areas and the wider community.

We continue to have an organising approach at the heart of our work and campaigns, which enable us to exert power and influence to make improvements to our members' working and home lives as well as organising around wider social issues.

We continue to grow and win, by building from the ground upwards. We are increasing member participation by recruiting more new members, including those from under-represented groups – particularly young members who continue to be attracted to PCS due to its campaigning and organising strategy.

We have a widening layer of activists that we can call on to mobilise, recruit, campaign and organise, but we need to constantly reach out to a new layer to ensure that as many of our members are willing and able to take part in PCS to help share the work. A huge number of our members already sign petitions, attend meetings and generally support the union, but we want them to go that step further. To that end, we aim to have 10,000 advocates by 2020 and want 60% of our reps and Advocates to be women.

This new layer of members and activists need to be developed and mentored and we have now launched the PCS Academy which contains basic training, bitesize courses and more in-depth courses to suit a range of needs.

Reserved seats have now been introduced on our National Executive Committee for all under-represented groups apart from women. The NEC will organise further discussion throughout the union over the next year to win support for changes to the union's structures and rules which would bring about increased women's representation on the NEC and other union bodies.

We have also made great use of new technology this year, introducing a new Branch App and phone bank system that have been extensively used during our pay campaign, and will be developed for wider organising purposes as the year progresses. Our website is being developed as a proactive organising tool to include live blogs and commentary, particularly from our under-represented groups. Our social media coverage has increased, and we have held a number of Facebook Live events which have been viewed over a quarter of a million times.

Organising is more than just recruitment. We need to mobilise members to be involved in our campaigns in order to build our union's power. We do, however, need to continue to recruit more members into our union and this strategy outlines our continued plan to grow to 200,000 members by 2020. To help us achieve this, we need to recruit one new member for every existing 100 members every month in every branch in 2019.

This strategy sets out our objectives to firmly embed the culture of organising into PCS as we move towards 2020.

As a union, we are committed to the recruitment and representation of our members in both the public and commercial sectors. We continue to work with the commercial sector association which is expanding as more services are privatised to ensure those members feel part of the union and are able to be involved.

We have been assisted again this year in putting together the 2019 National Organising Strategy by Dr Andy Hodder from the University of Birmingham and we are grateful for his support as a critical friend of the union.

**Mark Serwotka** General secretary

## 2020 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In 2018, PCS agreed ambitious objectives as part of a three year strategy to take us to the end of 2020:

1. Growth in membership: 200,000 members by 2020
2. Organising strength: increasing density, reps, and member participation
3. Financial objectives: budget surplus and £2m in the fighting fund by 2020
4. Key industrial objectives:
  - a. Breaching the 1% pay cap in the public sector, fair pay increases in the private sector
  - b. A properly-resourced public sector with job security agreements
  - c. Progress on national bargaining in the civil service, and on the right to unionise and be covered by collective bargaining in private sector organisations, founded on strong workplace organisation.

A strong union depends on building active participation and growing the size of the union overall. In this way we can win on the issues that matter to our members and their families. This strategy is summarised as: **building, growing, winning.**

The 2019 National Organising Strategy sets out the progress we have made to meet our objectives and the work that remains to be taken forward to meet these objectives by 2020.

## Building, Growing, Winning

Building, Growing, Winning connects the basic elements of union building:

- member participation
- recruitment of new members
- bargaining from a position of strength
- winning.

The key to being able to win means that we maximise participation in the union amongst existing members and constantly recruit new members to our union.

Our aim in workplaces and branches is to incrementally increase membership participation and involvement by starting with small tests and building the scale and scope of these tests.

Building participation means that we systematically test the strength of our membership at various points in a campaign by testing the support that members have for their union on a particular issue.

Tests of the strength of our membership usually start small, and could include:

- holding petitions
- getting members and non-members to meetings
- asking all members to wear a badge or sticker on a particular day and at a particular time
- organising pay day protests
- asking members to take part in a particular activity.



Photo: Guy Smallman



It is then essential that we make sure we monitor this incremental increase in involvement and set tasks for interested members accordingly.

**National pay campaign**

The biggest recent tests of the strength of our organisation have been through the two statutory ballots held on pay, in the summer of 2018 and in March/April 2019.

These ballots, and the consultative ballot on pay that preceded our first statutory ballot, give us a very clear indication of the strength of our membership, where we are strong and where we need to build the union.

As part of the preparation for the March/April 2019

national ballot we asked all members to volunteer for one or more specific activity, and followed these volunteers up if they were not already reps to ask them to register as union Advocates. The very fact of asking members to help with their union generated thousands of pledges to volunteer some of their time from ‘ordinary’ members.

To support the Building, Growing, Winning cycle, PCS nationally has made radical changes to the way in which we support branches and members. During the 2019 pay campaign we have been using sophisticated Branch App and mobile call centre technology to facilitate the systematic contact and organisation of members.

Members and reps are now supported by a dedicated membership support centre.

## OVERVIEW OF 2020 NATIONAL ORGANISING OBJECTIVES

### Building our organising strength

1. We will have 10,000 Union Advocates by 2020
2. There will be one or more PCS representatives or Advocates in every workplace, representing the diversity of our members and encouraging members from underrepresented sections of the membership to take an active role in the union
3. Separate branch BEC positions will be filled by individual members
4. 95% of members, and 100% of reps and advocates will have up to date personal contact information stored on the PCS database
5. Distribution networks (the way that we get union materials and messages directly to members) in workplaces will be reliable and efficient and in place for all branches and groups
6. We will have training and support packages in place for reps and for members wishing to become active in the union.

### Growing our membership base

1. Grow the union by 10% to 200,000 members by 2020. This will be done by:
  - a. recruiting new members to the union at a rate of one new member per month for every 100 existing members by the end of 2018; one new member per month for every 80 existing members by the end of 2019; one new member per month for every existing 70 members by the end of 2020
  - b. Every branch and every workplace to have density levels above 50% by 2020
2. Build a Fighting Fund of £2 million by 2020 by ensuring the majority of members are making small contributions to the Fighting Fund by 2020
3. Members from under-represented sections of the membership (young, black, disabled members, LGBT and women) will be represented at branch, group, regional and national level proportionate to the make-up of the union's membership.

### Winning on the issues that matter to our members

1. Break the government's public sector pay cap
2. Demand pay rises of 10% or better for all members
3. National agreements on job security for all members
4. National bargaining for the civil service
5. Properly funded and resourced public services
6. Identifying, campaigning and winning on local issues
7. Fair and equal treatment in the workplace.

### Building

Maximising participation in union activity amongst our members is the key factor in generating the power that is required to win. Lots of members participating in, and being proud of, their union exponentially builds the visibility of the union in the workplace. High participation amongst members in turn means we retain members and recruit new members. Maximising participation in the union is therefore the basic building block towards winning consistently and winning on the big issues. Recruiting new members to the union and retaining existing members requires a massive increase in the numbers of members who are prepared to take an active role in PCS.

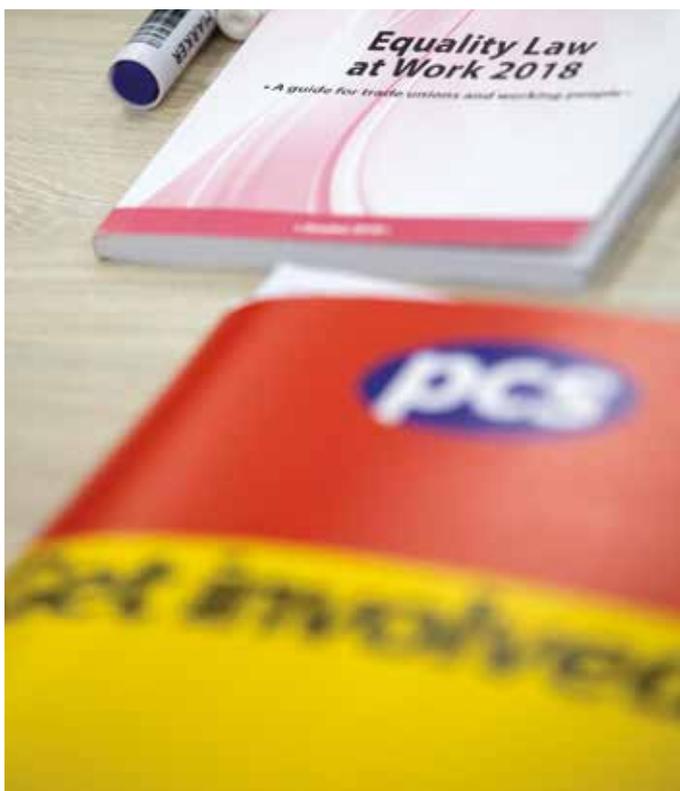
Our 6,000 union representatives already take on a range of essential union activity, handling local negotiations and representing individual members, and being the face of the union in our workplaces.

To support our representatives, our aim is to encourage and inspire many more thousands of members to participate in the union, as our campaigners and our recruiters. Activity around the pay ballots has proved that, where we ask members to take on specific tasks and activities then members are prepared to help and participate. Campaigning activity has also meant that we have been able to increase the number of advocates in the union and emphasise the fact that the key advocate role is talking to members and non-members about the union.

Our aim is to have 10,000 Union Advocates registered by 2020. This is an increase from the 1,000 advocates currently registered.

Whilst ambitious this is achievable. Every time we run a survey of members a minimum of one third of those members asked say that they would like to get more involved in the union. Members who would like to do more for their union say that the main barrier to activity is that they cannot fit this in with their working lives or that they do not feel confident to get involved. By breaking the tasks down – handing out 10 leaflets, speaking to 5 members, recruiting one new member – we nurture and build confidence amongst our members, with the potential to massively increase participation levels across the union.

We need branches to be pro-active about approaching members to get involved in their union and to be welcoming and encouraging of those members who want to get involved. Get these members registered as



Advocates, support them by buddying them up with a BEC member, and give them small tasks to help out with.

Union Advocates will receive regular bulletins, advice and guidance from the national union and should be supported by more experienced representatives in the branches and workplaces. Union Advocates and those wishing to become Advocates, will be invited to regular seminars and ‘webinars’ and other training opportunities focusing on specific campaigns and mobilisations.

PCS nationally and regionally can help with short training sessions for new advocates and we now offer a one day ‘Welcome to PCS’ course for members not already registered as reps but looking to get involved in the union.

We should look to particularly encourage union members who are from under-represented sections of the membership (young, black, disabled members, LGBT and women) to register as union advocates and to get active in the union.

Union Advocates are the next generation of union representatives. We now have over 500 members who initially took up advocate positions who have gone on to take up union representative posts. But the key role

of the Advocate is to act as an additional, grassroots face and voice of the union.

The more visible the PCS presence in the workplace, the more members join, stay and get involved in their union.

### Growing

The three year strategy sets out our aim to grow the union by 10% to 200,000 members by 2020 – 10% more members in every branch and workplace by 2020. By achieving this we also start to tackle areas of the union where we have low density levels.

Recruitment levels grew during the pay campaign and ballot in June and July 2018, and throughout 2018 we recruited members at an average rate of around 1,400 members every month.

In 2018 we introduced a ‘recruitment rate’ target to be applied across all areas of the union and in all workplaces helps us to focus attention on the importance of recruitment and instil in all reps, members and full time staff employed by PCS that it is everyone’s responsibility to recruit new members to the union.

By the end of 2018 we just fell short of our aim of recruiting members at a rate of 1% – one new member for every 100 members per month.

However, we still have more members leaving the union than joining. To meet our target and grow our union to 200,000 members by the end of 2020 means that if the number of leavers remains constant, by 2020 we will need to be recruiting 2,600 members per month, more than doubling the current average number of new recruits to the union.

It is clear that new staff are coming in to the areas where we organise and are not being recruited to the union, and in many cases are not even being asked to join the union.

As a minimum, we absolutely must be talking to every new entrant and apprentice as soon as they come in to work, making sure quality union materials are available and we have confident reps and Advocates able to talk to potential members persuasively and credibly. New members need to provide with opportunities to get involved in union activity and be able to support the union in the workplace.

By building the union, finding the advocates to support the reps, raising the profile of the union in all our workplaces we will be far better placed to recruit new members and retain existing members.

Recruiting new members to the union must be everyone's responsibility. We recruit new members by talking to non-members – our friends and colleagues at work. If we break the task down, it is achievable – recruit one new member for every 100 existing members every month. The best way of recruiting new members is for existing members to speak to them and ask them to join, every day, in multiple conversations and multiple workplaces.

To grow the union – to recruit new members to PCS – we build high participation, getting more members active and involved in supporting their union. High participation helps us generate the power needed to win the changes for PCS members and their families. High participation means visibility and activity in workplaces, and it is in this environment that we recruit and retain members.

### Winning

PCS is rightly regarded as a campaigning, member-led and democratic union. We remain at the forefront of campaigning on the issues that matter to our members, on pay, on the compensation scheme, on performance management, on terms and conditions.

Our three year strategy is based on building and growing the union so that we can be assured that we negotiate from a position of strategy now is to build and grow so that we can win. And win big.

During 2019 we are demanding:

- A cost of living pay increase for all workers in the Civil Service and its related bodies of 10% with a minimum underpin of £2,400 and a Living Wage of £10 per hour nationally and £11.55 in London.
- National bargaining on pay across the Civil Service and its related areas.
- Equal pay and coherence of pay and terms and conditions across those areas.
- A mechanism to ensure staff can move to the maximum of their grade.
- The pay increase to be fully funded and not linked to detrimental changes to terms and conditions.

All our experiences of winning ballots tells us that a consistent and determined effort is required to breach the 50% turnout threshold. What is also consistently clear is that turnout is always greatest in branches and workplaces with the most active and visible union presence. Branches with low levels of reps and named activists or advocates compared to the size of their membership have the lowest turnout.

Voter turnout in branches is a fundamental test of how well organised we are at every level, and is therefore a test of how strong our union membership is in all of our workplaces. We are using voter turnout in ballots as a key benchmark in determining where we need to build the union in order to grow and win.

The process of being 'ballot ready' in all of our workplaces demands that we have done the groundwork well in advance, so we know that if we are to call a statutory ballot at any time we can confidently predict that we will get over 50% turnout in all of our workplaces.

Winning a ballot – and having the employer know that we are capable of winning a ballot – is a crucial lever in moving to a position where we can win. And we can only be confident of winning when we have done the work to build and grow the union.



Photo: Timm Sonnenschein

## CHANGING THE WAY WE ORGANISE: OUR PRINCIPLES

High participation organising is underpinned by the following principles:

- Organising and campaigning are not separate activities
- Organising campaigns must be directly linked to winning important changes at work
- Organising campaigns must focus on widening participation in the union
- Members from under-represented sections of our membership (young, black, disabled members, LGBT and women) should especially be encouraged to participate
- Organising campaigns must be led by members and supported by PCS staff – not the other way around
- Communicating our objectives must be simple, clear and effective
- We must use technological advances to systematically track and identify potential new Advocates
- Every task that our reps and advocates take on should always involve conversations with individual or groups of members and non-members
- We should experiment with new ways of encouraging personal contact, such as phone-banking.

### How we measure progress

To support our 2020 strategic objectives we have introduced structured planning cycles, based on the model of Building, Growing, Winning, and plans will include key milestones and metrics (the things we can measure).

The key metrics will be:

- 200,000 new members by 2020
- 10,000 advocates by 2020
- Recruitment rates of 1% in 2019 – recruiting one new member for every existing 100 members every month
- 60% of our reps and advocates to be women
- 100% of all activists' contact information
- 95% of all members' contact information
- Density levels of over 50% in all workplaces.

Plans will split each year into periods throughout the



year to 2020, taking into account the national and departmental pay and key bargaining timetables. Plans will adopt a consistent approach to building the union in poorly organised workplaces, with a small number of sub plans aimed at specific industrial targets.

Plans will continue union building in target workplaces; identifying local campaigns, identifying advocates, increasing participation and increasing membership.

Sub-plans will focus on concentrated efforts to support industrial campaigns and will be:

- Based on popular industrial demands
- Used to identify high numbers of advocates
- Used to train new advocates and activists in winning campaigns
- Aimed to significantly increase participation of members through large numbers of personal contacts
- Supported by a high engagement communications strategy
- Aimed to significantly increase membership levels.

During 2018 was significant improvement in the reporting mechanisms we can use to monitor the implementation of the plan relating to the implementation of the new database.

## SKILLS AND SUPPORT: 2020 PCS ACADEMY

Developing and implementing a plan to build, grow and win requires the development and support for our reps, Advocates and full time staff.

We have updated our formal trade union education programme, with more new and existing reps trained in more courses during 2018 than for the past six years.

We have also developed the 2020 PCS Academy, first course prospectus, which should enable us to support new and existing reps and interested members by delivering short courses, online support training and web-based mass training and briefing sessions.

The 2020 PCS Academy covers:

- Organising; union-building and mobilising as key parts of industrial campaigns
- Planning and reviewing organising campaigns

- Communication and face-to-face engagement skills; writing and social media, use of data to assess engagement
- Digital skills training.

Many of the tasks needed to deliver the 2020 objectives are not necessarily complex: mapping the workplace, talking to members, updating data and organising local meetings. These do not require extensive training, but they do require some core skills as well as confidence and motivation.

To deliver the objectives we need many more members to do this work. We have developed and rolled out ballot ready training and a briefing session which has been aimed at reps, advocates and interested members. These sessions are able to be delivered simultaneously in multiple locations and on-line.

This is part of the process of developing basic skills, identifying more advocates and enabling us to encourage more members into activity.



## WHAT NEXT?

There are some actions that any activist can take immediately to start organising at their respective level of the union to help us achieve our objectives.

### 1. Carry out a health check

A health check can be carried out by any activist in relation to your workplace, branch, or group. The health check is essentially a fact finding exercise that can help you understand where you need representatives, where you can recruit groups of new members, and assess your strengths and weaknesses across the workplace, branch or group. For help running a health check, please see our resources section guides, including templates.

### 2. Set up a communication network group

PCS can operate more effectively if we have multiple lines of communication to our membership. This firstly means that we have the contact details of members at work, so that we can then set up a communication network group, and can ensure that, as reps or advocates, we can easily pass on messages to members. The other side of communications is ensuring we have a way of contacting members that does not rely on the employer giving us access to facilities. This means encouraging all members to provide PCS with a personal contact detail, whether that is mobile phone or personal e-mail address.

### 3. Talk to a member or group of members and identify an issue at work that matters to them

It is easier to recruit members to unions if it is around an issue that members care about. By holding a surgery session, walking around desks, or even having a discussion at the tea point, you can help identify an issue that we may be able to run and win a small local campaign around to show members and non-members what PCS can achieve.

### 4. Recruit a friend or work colleague to PCS

Branches have the right to ask for staff lists and for details of new starters. Get in the habit of doing the simple things every day: You might be a member of PCS but is the person sat next to you? Have you had someone new join your team or on the bank of desks next to you? PCS is always looking to recruit new members to the union – if every activist in PCS recruited one person a month for 12 months, this time next year we'd have 72,000 new members in PCS.

The opportunity to do so has never been better with recruitment in the Civil Service having been renewed in recent months. Recruit a member to PCS and continue to build our strength to challenge the employer.

For help and assistance with organising see the PCS resources, contact the national organising department or your regional PCS hub.



**Useful contacts**

**National Organising Department**

[organising@pcs.org.uk](mailto:organising@pcs.org.uk)

0207 801 2691

**Equalities and Learning Department**

[equalities@pcs.org.uk](mailto:equalities@pcs.org.uk)

0207 801 2820

**Membership Department**

[membership@pcs.org.uk](mailto:membership@pcs.org.uk)

0207 801 2670

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