

PCS Voice

The newsletter for PCS members in the DWP

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Editorial



DWP members continue to ramp up the pressure on the employer over office closures and in this issue we

have a round-up of where we are with the sites so far. Also covered is an in-depth look at Universal Credit and the impact on members and customers.

Following the ballot result it is clear that we need a strong PCS presence in every workplace, with high density of membership, and as many reps

“ We need to continue to push for a fully resourced, fully staffed public service

and advocates as possible. Reps and members should be congratulated for the work they have put in, but the fight is not over. If you sit next to a non-member, recruit them. If you haven't got a rep, become one or at least an advocate.

United

We need to continue to push for a fully resourced, fully staffed public service and apply pressure on the government and the chancellor before the budget. You can get involved by using our [pay calculator](#) to see how the cap affects you and then emailing him the result.

Workers across all public sectors have witnessed the value of their incomes collapse and have been forced to suffer years of falling living standards. With the current upheaval in politics we need to ensure that we stand together as a united membership and send a message that we all deserve and need a pay rise. We must not be divided.

Rachael Watts, editor

High turnout for pay ballot

The decisive **yes** vote by PCS members in our consultative ballot on pay sends a powerful message to the government to act to scrap the 1% public sector pay cap and fund above inflation pay rises for all our members. The ballot, run by the independent Electoral Reform Services, consisted of 2 questions:

1. Do you agree that the pay cap should be scrapped; and that funds should be made available to provide you with an above inflation pay rise?
2. If the government refuses to scrap the pay cap, are you prepared to take part in industrial action?

On the first question 98.9% voted yes, while on the second question 79.2% voted yes. Overall there was a turnout of 48.8%.

Historic vote

PCS General Secretary Mark Serwotka said: “In a historic vote we've sent the most resounding message to Theresa May and her government to scrap the pay cap and that all PCS members deserve a pay rise.”

DWP pay and employee deal

Some members and branches have queried how any success in breaking the pay cap and achieving more pay would sit with the 4-year employee deal and addressing the gap between those members who accepted the terms of the offer and those who opted out. PCS' key aim is to achieve an above



“ In a historic vote we've sent the most resounding message to Theresa May and her government to scrap the pay cap and that all PCS members deserve a pay rise

– Mark Serwotka

inflation pay rise for all members regardless of grade. Even with the large percentage increases many received under the employee deal terms a large proportion of our members received a pay award in 2017 that was below the current 3% inflation rate.

The GEC is clear that the only way to resolve the outstanding pay related issues is for additional funding to be secured

from the Treasury and for the government's public sector pay cap to be lifted. It is by achieving this aim that we stand the best chance of addressing the restraint for members; who will receive below inflation pay rises under employee deal; in grades SEO and above, who continue to be restricted to the pay cap; who are based in SLPZ sites, receiving just above the pay cap; who have opted out and been limited to just 0.25% for the lifetime of the 4 year deal.

The DWP has confirmed to PCS that it has no additional flexibility from the Treasury to address the concerns of our members in these areas and so the overwhelming rejection of the pay cap and the determination of members to take action if necessary, are powerful weapons in our aim of getting a decent pay rise for all our members across DWP.

In brief

APPRENTICES IN DWP

All apprentices in DWP should have one day a week away from their normal role to ensure they have time off in order to complete their learning. It appears that this is not happening in all areas.

DWP reps need to ensure the department is adhering to the Cabinet Office/CS Collective agreement, and if not escalate through the normal channels. If you are unsure whether you are an apprentice speak to a local rep or your line manager, who will be able to clarify with human resources.

UN DELIVERS DAMNING REPORT

The United Nations has accused the UK's Conservative government of violating the human rights of disabled people by slashing welfare provisions. A report by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities criticised reforms brought in by former work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith.

The committee said cuts and caps to welfare, introduced under the guise of austerity, gravely or systematically violate the rights of disabled people. The government was also attacked for its cuts to housing benefits, which caused a high level of stress and depression.

CSCS VICTORY

On 18 July we won a **judicial review** at the High Court, ruling that the government failed to consult our union with a view to reaching agreement as required by law. This stunning and comprehensive victory means that the more generous 2010 Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS) has been reinstated, and will apply to those who have left on redundancy since the new terms were imposed. The court has quashed the cuts to the scheme, refused the government the right to appeal and made a full costs award against the government.

Equality forum hits Leeds

The DWP group held its third successful equality forum in Leeds on 25 July. Members of the group women, LGBT+, black members and equality advisory committees attended along with regional equality reps. The forum provides an opportunity for all of the different strands to interact and discuss areas common to all and an overview of issues that may be pertinent to a particular group.

The meeting was addressed by Fran Heathcote, DWP group president, who gave an overview of the office closure and pay campaigns. Group organiser Marie McDonough also addressed the meeting and gave an insight into the group organising plan underlining that recruitment was a high priority. Annette Rochester, group vice president, gave a presentation highlighting the current policies and proposed changes remarking that while 'intersectionality and inclusion have merits there may be a danger in overlooking some of



the real issues that some marginalised groups experience'. Delegates made excellent contributions highlighting the pros and cons of the proposed policy, which represents a sea change in how it deals with inclusion. Reps also noted the intent for moving away from equality towards inclusion and from identity towards intersectionality. (This describes how social inequality is experienced as an "intersection" of several forms of discrimination). Management agreed to meet PCS TUS with regards to the

proposals during August and the meeting provided invaluable areas for consideration and to take forward.

Our group equality officer Carrie-Anne Watkins has worked with the equality groups to construct an assistive technology survey. It is important that reps encourage all assistive technology users to complete the survey when it is sent out as we are aware that software such as Dragon may still be incompatible with new systems such as Universal Credit Full Service.

Fran Heathcote, group president



We all need a pay rise

PCS delivered a fantastic result in the recent pay ballot, with

99% of the union's public sector members indicating that they want to see the public sector pay cap end and investment in public services and 79% expressing a willingness to take strike action if government refused. What a brilliant bargaining mandate to take to the government.

Well done to all of the great members and reps in the DWP who voted to send a clear message to this government that the 1% cap must be scrapped. There can be no artificial division between 'more deserving' and 'less deserving' public sector workers, we all need a pay rise.

Scream if you want to go faster

Universal Credit is very much in the news with the recent parliamentary debate when MPs voted 299-0 for it to be paused. The result was not 'binding' and the government seems determined to plough on regardless. Just a week or so before, PCS wrote to Robert Devereux making the same demand, following multiple concerns raised by our members, but Neil Couling, UC director replied stating that 'the call from our people' was to 'go faster, not to pause'. PCS agrees that our members do an excellent job but will continue to push for fundamental problems to be addressed before DWP presses ahead with full service. These include poor training, too few staff, poor IT systems causing stress for our members and the

six-week wait for payments, causing rising debt, rent arrears and even evictions for some claimants.

Campaign to stop office closures and defend jobs continues

Our determined members at Sheffield Eastern Avenue continued with their brilliant campaign to defend their office with indefinite strike action until its closure on 17 November.

This month members at Plymouth also took well supported action in their campaign to keep Old Tree Court open. DWP must listen to PCS and many others, telling them to halt these nonsensical closure plans to allow our members to continue to provide the quality service they want to give to the people that use our services.

Fran Heathcote, president

Was your mid-year review rating fair?

Everyone should have had a mid-year performance review during October 2017. The new people performance process for 2017–18 is built on the abolition of ‘Guided distribution’, ‘Validation’ and the ‘Must improve’ rating and introduces:

- a rating process with four ratings – exceptional, good, developing and poor
- light-touch sense checking instead of consistency checking and validation.

This is the first time that the new rating process has been applied in DWP for each individual employee covered by this performance management system. This will also be the rating process for end-of-year reviews for 2017–18. No process is perfect when applied in reality for the first time for tens of thousands of individuals but in all cases ratings should always be arrived at based on a balanced consideration of the employee’s personal performance over the entire period and decisions must be transparent, fair and reasonable. Anyone dissatisfied with the fairness of their mid-year rating should dispute it without delay rather than wait and see what happens at the end of the year.

Dispute unfair ratings

It is best practice to try to resolve disputes informally and only resort to formal action as a last resort. However, you can raise a formal grievance and appeal under people performance procedure 13 but you must put your case for management investigation on form G1 within 30 working days of the original decision (grievance procedure 5.7). You may contact your local PCS representative for advice, support and representation.

New rating process

The rating process is summarised

under new People Performance Procedure 4.2: The manager and employee should consider where an employee’s performance falls in relation to these ratings, taking into account the descriptors and the employee’s performance throughout the year against known performance expectations. The appropriate rating will always be based on a balanced consideration of the employee’s personal performance over the entire period.

Most employees will fall under ‘good’ or ‘exceptional’. A team may have no one with a Developing rating at the end of the year. The good rating encompasses the widest span of performance: at this level performance could be verging on needing development or generally satisfactory.

Poor rating strictly limited

The ‘poor’ rating is strictly limited under new procedure 4.3 to those undergoing formal poor performance procedures at 30 September for mid-year purposes or the end of the year at 31 March. Those who are in the post-improvement period will not be included in this category.

“Anyone dissatisfied with the fairness of their mid-year rating should dispute it without delay rather than wait and see what happens at the end of the year

– Dave Burke

A team may have no developing ratings

A team may have no one with a developing rating at the end of the year. As the appropriate rating will always be based on a balanced consideration of personal performance over the entire period this also means a team may have no one with a developing rating at mid-year.

Good rating covers widest span

The good rating encompasses the widest span of performance: at this level performance could be verging on needing development or generally satisfactory.

Exceptional criteria rating covers exceeded outcomes, exceeded competency and behaviour standards. No essential development necessary

for employee to meet required standards for the role.

Ratings must be transparent, fair and reasonable

The terms of people performance procedure 4.2, and procedures 4.4 – 4.6 are intended to support appropriate use of the new ratings:

- Ratings will always be arrived at based on a balanced consideration of the employee’s personal performance over the entire period and decisions must be transparent, fair and reasonable. (Procedure 4.4)
- When reviewing performance over a period it is important to remember that minor one-off “blips” are ok and no one should be given a “developing” rating based on a low-impact one-off event. (Procedure 4.5)
- The developing rating includes employees whose performance has needed essential development over part or all of the year to address under performance – either on outcomes (the ‘what’), competencies and related behaviours (the ‘how’) or both. Development plans will focus on the areas requiring essential development to a satisfactory standard. The developing rating is not appropriate simply because the employee is new to the job role, under probation, an apprentice or on a professional accreditation programme. (Procedure 4.6)

PCS will review any procedural problems which have been identified arising out of the mid-year reviews with DWP. Evaluation of the people performance process for 2017–18 will also inform consultation and planning for the people performance process from April 2018.



Campaign to stop office closures, defend jobs and services to the public continues

The campaign to stop office closures continues to be brought to the fore by reps and members across the country. In this section we look at how the campaign has grown

Eastern Avenue dispute

PCS members at Sheffield Eastern Avenue have fought a brilliant campaign. So far they have already been on strike for more than 30 days; Friday 2 June, Monday 12 to Friday 16 June, Monday 17 July to Friday 21 July, Monday 14 August to Friday 25 August, Monday 18 to Friday 22 September. On every strike day ordinary members have turned up to picket and a great rapport has been built with campaign and community groups.

Despite management bringing in staff from other sites to keep the office open, the strike held up very well. Members have had widespread support from PCS reps and members, some travelling long distances to be there, from the Labour party, Green party, De Hood, Unite the Community, the Unemployed Workers' Combine and others. There has been widespread press coverage, letters of support and donations to the hardship fund. A video has been made about the campaign which has been aired on YouTube and social media and on 7 October a benefit gig was held in order to raise funds and maximise support for the campaign.

PCS members at Sheffield Eastern Avenue Jobcentre again voted to strike from Monday, 23 October until Friday, 17 November, when the office is now due to close. A national day of protest was held on Friday, 10 November to support members at Eastern Avenue who took their 41st day of strike action in the long running campaign



“ We work here, we shop here, we socialise here. We're very much part of this community and that's very much the way we want to keep it

– Gillian Jones

to try to keep the jobcentre open.

Whitley Bay march

The Eastern Avenue campaign has given confidence to others and when DWP announced in mid-July that Whitley Bay jobcentre would close within 4 weeks, members there immediately asked to be balloted. The ballot was won with a 100% 'yes' vote on a 100% turnout and more than 100 protestors turned out in horrible weather on Saturday, 12 August to march through the centre of Whitley Bay, give out leaflets in the town centre and hear from the local MP, a local claimant and our group

president about the impact on the community of removing a jobcentre presence from Whitley Bay.

On 17 and 18 August, the strike was supported by every PCS member at Whitley Bay and the office was only opened by the district management team.

Unfortunately, the jobcentre was due to close on 18 August and claimants and staff have now been transferred to North Shields, with no travel costs paid.

Disgracefully, DWP arranged for the furniture to be cleared from Whitley Bay jobcentre around the picket line and picketing members watched their desks and chairs being carried out, while another employee of the removal firm unscrewed the light fittings, narrowly avoiding a parking fine in the process.

Community loss

On Friday, 25 August it was the turn of Hoylake in Merseyside, another jobcentre earmarked for early closure and due to close that day.

Members again asked to be balloted and again won the ballot on a 100% turnout. The strike was supported by 100% of the members in Hoylake and has sent a strong message to the DWP, with excellent support from other union branches, local activists and members of the PCS DWP group executive committee.

More than 400 signatures have already been added to a petition demanding the office stays open, and local businesses have expressed their concern at the loss of custom they will suffer.

Also on 25 August members in Coatbridge were showing their opposition to closure plans for their office by attending a demonstration to hear speeches from their local rep, Gillian Jones, their MP, Hugh Gaffney, Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn and PCS President, Janice Godrich. All speakers condemned these office closures as nonsensical and urging the government and DWP to think again.

After the speeches, members marched through the high street back to the

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area outside their office and heard solidarity speeches from DPAC (Disabled People Against Cuts) and from our DWP president, Fran Heathcote.

Gillian Jones, the PCS branch secretary, said its survey of the DWP staff being relocated had found they spent thousands of pounds each week in local shops. "The loss to this community of these jobs is going to have a huge impact," she said. "We work here, we shop here, we socialise here. We're very much part of this community and that's very much the way we want to keep it".

Centralisation won't work

PCS members across South East Wales are very angry about the complete lack of understanding about the local geography and the transport problems that the plans to close 5 DWP sites and move the work to an unconfirmed location. Although the new site is still unconfirmed, the design and location for a new DWP building was found on an architect's website.

“The Corporate Centre hub strategy has, as predicted, resulted in many members being at risk of redundancy”

DWP proposes to centralise the work and jobs out of Cwmbran Pension Centre, Newport Benefit Centre, Merthyr Benefit Centre, Caerphilly Benefit Centre and Gabalfa and move 1,700 jobs to a potential site at Treforest industrial estate, which would have a serious impact on many of our members and run a real risk of redundancy.

During August, one of our reps, Sian undertook to show what the journey would mean for her, accompanied by the local MP. Sian is a part-time worker so that she can balance work with bringing up two kids on her own. Currently she can work 6 hours a day

and manage the school run. Something that the department and the government is encouraging. This would be totally impossible from the potential new site. The journey from home to the potential DWP North of Cardiff hub site and back took our PCS rep Sian 5 hours and 25 minutes. This was on a good day when there was much less traffic because of the school holidays. Sian doesn't live anywhere remote but the public transport links in South East Wales are very poor.

DWP needs to rethink its plans to close these 5 offices and relocate the work and jobs into somewhere so inaccessible. The 5 sites are all in communities where every job is needed and all the efforts of the Welsh Government and the Wales TUC are to encourage employers to move employment into these areas.

Uncertainty

Workers arriving at Bridge House jobcentre in Blyth, in Northumberland were confronted with a bailiff's notice on the front door. The landlord of the site, contracted to Telereal Trillum as part of the DWP jobcentre network, has posted the notice to advise that bailiffs can enter and "repossess" the building.

The department had originally planned to close Bridge House, but reconsidered its decision as recently as 10 August. This incident with the bailiffs has simply created more confusion for the 27 workers at the site.

Corporate centre chaos

In the corporate centre, we are receiving numerous anecdotal reports of staff being asked to travel several hours from home to hub locations at taxpayers' expense, just to fit the DWP 'hub strategy' which has seemingly been dreamt up on a whim with no care or thought for the hundreds of



staff it will potentially displace. The corporate centre hub strategy has, as predicted, resulted in many members being at risk of redundancy because they are unable to travel daily to one of the six hubs. DWP is showing no sign of relaxing this policy despite the detrimental impact to both our members and the department's business. The impact on members and the taxpayer in having to pay excess fares for staff for 3 years is a ridiculous cost in order to fit a departmental strategy.

Southall

PCS members in Southall won their ballot for action and planned to strike on 12 September, however a well-attended members' meeting voted to suspend action after DWP offered talks on keeping a footprint in Southall.

Back of house

PCS members at Old Tree Court in Plymouth took strike action on Monday 6 November – an overwhelming majority of members voted in favour of striking with 76.9% supporting the strike – in protest at the closure.

Old Tree Court office houses both a jobcentre and a benefit centre. Originally the whole site was to close. But successful campaigning by the PCS DWP Devon branch led to the jobcentre now staying open. The PCS members in the benefit centre however have been told they must

relocate to Clearbrook House in Roborough, in the north of the city. These staff work in the working age directorate which deals with the delivery of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Because of the geography and the transport connections of the area, a large number of members will not be able to relocate as it is well outside reasonable daily travel from their homes. This has left a significant number of members at risk of redundancy.

To further inflame the situation the DWP has decided to move other DWP staff, from another Plymouth office, into one of the floors being vacated at Old Tree Court, in the full knowledge that by doing so they were putting other staff at risk of redundancy. Our members feel betrayed by the department and have shown how strong their feelings are by voting to strike in such large numbers. Plymouth's action is significant as this is the first time where a large back of house site has taken action.

Several other larger sites are also planning to ballot. Now, with others consulting members virtually every week. DWP must rethink their plans now.

Anger is growing and this farcical strategy is being condemned right across the political spectrum. PCS urges DWP to stop this now and think again.

Universal Credit full service rollout

The recent decision by DWP to ramp up the rollout of UC full service to 50 jobcentres a month has come under a great deal of criticism in recent weeks. PCS, along with many organisations, campaigning on behalf of claimants, such as Citizens Advice Bureau, in addition to all opposition parties in parliament, as well as many of the governing Conservative party's own MPs, have been calling for the rollout of UC to be suspended until some of the many issues about the new benefit are addressed.

Response of politicians

The minister for work and pensions, David Gauke, and the senior responsible manager with responsibility for the rollout of Universal Credit have been heavily criticised by the parliamentary work and pensions select committee for continuing with the rollout of UC full service. In addition there have been two votes in parliament calling for UC to be suspended in order that the continued rollout does not place more claimants in financial crisis. In particular

“PCS will continue to campaign for a decent social security system, that protects the vulnerable and offers genuine support to people who need it

attention has been paid to the 6-week waiting period that claimants face before receiving their benefits.

Impact on PCS members

As the rollout of UC full service ramps up it is inevitable that pressure will ramp up on PCS members tasked with delivering



it. The government and the DWP have invested too much in UC for it to be seen to fail. From the moment DWP announced its plans, PCS has been clear that we believe the plans to be overly ambitious with the potential to create appalling problems for claimants left without money and terrible stress for PCS members in DWP who want to be proud of the job they are doing and deliver the kind of service that will genuinely support claimants to find work.

Members in the service centres currently delivering full service are reporting serious problems in delivering the role of case manager. When the role was designed it was anticipated that 20% of the time would be for dealing with telephony and 80% managing caseloads. However, this is not happening and a culture of chaos is developing in full service sites. One member of staff from Walsall has informed PCS: “The biggest problem is phones. We are constantly being called on to provide cover so can’t do the work we have. We have

successfully introduced the case management/trigger approach which has bought cases up to date but we now spend so much time covering phones our own work is falling behind. We will soon be back to making payments only and cases will once again fall into arrears and we will be back to square one. Every time we are called onto phones we fall further behind, this will lead to increased calls as work will not be done on time, which will mean more time on phones, leading to more customer complaints and increased stress levels among staff.”

More staff needed

While PCS welcomes the additional staff that are being recruited to UC, the vast majority of them will be added to the jobcentre network to deliver the “in work progression” element of UC.

Many people not currently trapped in the benefits system, such as low income workers and tax credit claimants, will, under UC full service, now have to engage with DWP and

“PCS welcomes the change of heart by the government to make the telephone line to UC a Freephone but this is too little, too late

demonstrate that they are attempting to get more hours or better paid work. An irony that will not be lost on DWP workers, working for the department charged with delivering the benefit who are not paid enough to escape this new form of benefit conditionality.

Key to addressing many of the problems PCS members have in delivering UC full service and the earlier live service version of UC is the staffing levels. Clearly with sufficient staffing it may be possible to break the cycle of staff being dragged on to the phone to deal with queries largely generated by their inability to have time to deal with the case management element of the role.

Shining a light on Universal Credit

It is clear from the department's own statistics that on many days of most weeks UC staff are unable to answer 20% of the incoming calls because of the lack of staff. Claimants unable to access the telephone service will often go to their local jobcentre in an attempt to deal with their issues, usually because they have no money. Unsurprisingly claimants in this position can be very angry and feel let down by the service they are getting. This can be very stressful for members who have to deal with a situation which is not of their making, and in extreme cases has led to serious incidents where claimants have harmed themselves or attacked jobcentre staff and CCOs.

It would appear very unwise to continue to rollout 50 jobcentres a month for the next year when at this early stage of rollout UC full service is barely able to keep its head above water, at a time when the majority of the 100 or so jobcentres that have currently rolled out full service are smaller offices with fewer claimants to see. The consequences for staff desperately trying to deliver a decent service against the odds are very serious; the consequences for claimants struggling to access their entitlement to benefit, particularly over the festive period in December and early January, are potentially catastrophic with them facing misery, hunger and eviction at Christmas.

One of the consequences in the raised profile of Universal Credit since the ramp up in the rollout of full service is that it has shone a light on some of the more unsavoury aspects of the benefit that have largely been ignored by politicians and the media before now.

Universal Credit simplifies the benefit system

Universal credit rolls together six

“ The biggest problem is phones. We are constantly being called on to provide cover so can't do the work we have

different benefits into one payment: Jobseeker's Allowance, housing benefit, tax credits, child tax credit, income support, and employment and support allowance (itself a roll-up of different disability benefits). Instead of a range of confusing forms and adjustments, the theory goes, you have a 'simplified' one-stop shop for your claim.

The big idea is that, instead of some benefits needing to account for other benefits in calculating your overall income, everything becomes a 'credit', dynamically adjusting to your circumstances. You are no longer 'in work' or 'out of work', but your income from work is assessed each month, with benefits 'tapering off' depending on how much it was. The result is anything but simple for either those claiming UC or those charged with its administration and this is evidenced by our members both in the service centres and in jobcentres.

Universal Credit and family values

Universal Credit is designed to reinforce a Conservative Party vision of "family values". This means that families cannot claim child support for more than two children, unless the mother can demonstrate that children



subsequent to the second child were as the result of rape.

Iain Duncan Smith the architect of Universal Credit believes there is a particular problem of what he calls 'dadlessness', supposedly leading to a life of crime. 'In the absence of a structured and balanced family life, the street gang becomes an alternative "family",' Duncan Smith opined. The solution to this is to make the benefit payable to households as opposed to individuals. Apart from the assumption that the tradition 1950s-style family unit is desirable there is a clear risk to women in abusive, controlling relationships who may find their partner withholding money from them.

At the heart of this ideology is the idea that people choose poverty and that not being poor is simply a matter of making the "right" choices such as not having more children or getting a better paid job. These are not real choices and outside of people's control.

Campaign for a decent social security system

The assumption was that everyone could complete their UC activities online but 10% of all households in the UK do not have access to the internet. This has had the inevitable consequence

of additional use of the telephones to access support. PCS welcomes the change of heart by the government to make the telephone line to UC a freephone but this is too little, too late.

Rumours abound that the government, following all of the negative publicity, are prepared to reduce the waiting time for Universal Credit payments. Again this would be welcome but will not resolve the fundamental unfairness at the heart of Universal Credit.

It is clear that unfairness and inequality are designed into Universal Credit and that at its heart is a cruel philosophy that aims to punish people for being poor rather than provide them with a safety net that will protect them in difficult times.

Our members want to be proud of the work they are doing rather than feel they are complicit in delivering the government's cruel agenda. We will continue to fight for decent jobs for its members; jobs that are staffed and paid properly that they can be proud to deliver.

We will continue to campaign for a decent Social Security system, that protects the vulnerable and offers genuine support to people who need it.

New approach for annual leave



PCS has been advised by the employer that it intends to adopt a new approach to annual leave in the DWP. Their view is that members should be able to request leave a year in advance and know whether this is approved within a reasonable timescale.

The GEC is not opposed to this in principle as we know that being able to plan in advance is advantageous for many member when they want to book a holiday and have the opportunity of the cheapest deals for instance or need to arrange cover for school

holidays over summer periods with relatives.

Issues could have been avoided

We are however disappointed that we were not consulted in advance on the adoption of this policy, as although there are benefits to adopting this approach, there are also some significant issues for many of our members which could have been mitigated had PCS been properly consulted in advance.

We are aware that many members cannot organise their leave up to a year in advance

because of their personal circumstances, such as their partner's leave not being available at that time, depending on their work, making cover for childcare impossible to organise that far in advance. If all leave is made available a year in advance and then confirmed to those who have applied, it could mean that there is no possibility of those unable to plan a year in advance ever getting access to this leave should they need it.

Not only this booking leave a year in advance can mean that those on leave at the end of a month one year, will be off when it is approved for the following year and that they have been effectively barred from leave that month the next year.

To add further confusion different parts of DWP are implementing this policy in different ways meaning wide-scale confusion due to the differences in practises.

The GEC is calling upon the employer to enter into discussions with PCS on the whole issue and on the implementation of the policy in each of the directorates in order to seek a solution which works for all of our members.

Get in touch

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Next issue

All contributions to dwpeditor@pcs.org.uk

Your letters

I am writing to the Voice to express my disgust at the DWP Corporate Centre hub strategy which has been dreamt up by director generals in DWP and is affecting me and my colleagues.

This pointless strategy states that loyal staff who work in ops sites for the corporate centre, lots of us for decades, must now be based in one of a handful of hubs – all in England

by the way, none in Scotland, none in Wales.

DWP will pay us excess fares for 3 years to get to our nearest hub, hundreds of miles in some cases (does this pass the Daily Mail test?), and those who cannot, and cannot be redeployed in ops, will be out of a job.

When we ask why, in an age when we are all supposed to be 'digital by default' and more

and more work is done remotely we are being forced into this position, we have had a vague assertion that there is 'evidence that people work better when they are all together' and that it will 'save money in the long run'. We know that this is nonsense and ask PCS to challenge this in the strongest terms.

Concerned PCS member