

PCS International Women's Day campaign toolkit

2012

Women speaking out, not cut out



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1 Foreword

International Women's Day (IWD) started in 1911. It is about celebrating the political, social and economic gains of women while campaigning for further advancement and real equality.

The House of Commons usually holds a debate to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March. No doubt this time the coalition government will use this opportunity to praise women trailblazers in corporate boardrooms.

Trade unions prefer to celebrate the struggles of women workers and activists in the UK and across the globe, many risking violence and imprisonment to fight for the rights of their fellow workers and justice for all. These are the trailblazers we should remember - such as the young women mill workers in Massachusetts who won their strike for fair pay and dignity at work exactly 100 years ago. And in the UK - the Match

Girls in 1888, the Chainmakers in 1910 and the Dagenham Ford machinists who fought for equal pay in 1968.

These women and thousands of others inspired generations of future workers by showing that after decades of adversity, women, and often migrant workers, could unite together and win.

This is a lesson we value to this day, as we celebrate International Women's Day in 2012 by continuing to fight together against the devastating impact of government cuts on ordinary women, our families, our colleagues and our communities.

Sue Bond, PCS Vice President and Chair of the National Women's Forum

Phyllis Opoku-Gyimah, Head of Equality and Health and Safety



Photo: Andy Forman

2 Welcome to the PCS International Women's Day campaign toolkit 2012

Today, women across the world are fighting against political and economic austerity with vigor and passion. From the Arab Spring to the mass protests in Greece and record breaking public sector strikes on 30 November in the UK, women have been active in challenging the system and using their voices against injustice.

This year PCS is integrating our International Women's Day (IWD) work with the national campaign about pay, pensions and jobs. The aim is to highlight and campaign against government austerity measures and the way they disproportionately impact on women. IWD is our opportunity to use our voices – speaking out, not cut out.

We want everyone – women and men – to challenge the orthodoxy of cuts that are increasing inequality and could take women's equality back generations.

Whether you have just 3 minutes or a couple of hours to give to this important campaign, your help will raise the volume of our collective voice.

The international theme

As the international theme for IWD 2012 is 'connecting girls, inspiring futures', it seems an ideal opportunity to involve our children and young women in campaigning.

A daughter, niece or granddaughter could help write a letter to the local press or come with you to meet your politician outside school hours. When reading through the section 'what you can do...', think about how to involve a young woman or girl you know in the suggested campaign actions, while ensuring you have parental consent in advance (if applicable).

Let's fight the cuts now and develop the voices of future generations so they know how to speak out too.



Photos: Left: Mark Campbell, right: Jess Hurd

3 How the cuts affect women

PCS campaigns for fair pay, fair pensions and jobs. Achieving this would boost the economy and cut the deficit. Crucially, it would also stop the attack on women's equality that threatens to take back women's independence by generations and force women out of work and into the home.

This section contains information relating specifically to women in both the public and commercial sector about pay, pensions and jobs. At the end, there's a brief list of cuts in services and benefits that we know will also affect women disproportionately.

Please use this information when talking to people about the campaign, and particularly when meeting with your political representative.

Further information can be found at pcs.org.uk/iwd2012

Pay

A quarter of working women are employed in the public sector and women make up 65% of public sector workers. Pay inevitably therefore impacts more on women than men.

The two year pay 'freeze' (for those earning over £21,000) and following two year pay cap at an average of 1%, equates to a real terms pay cut as inflation is running at over 4%.

An additional threat is posed by government proposals for regional/local wwpay rates. This will institutionalise low pay and create 'employment ghettos'. Public sector women outside London – the vast majority of PCS women members – will be at risk of having their current pay slashed, plus as the main carers of children and on lower grades generally than men, they are unlikely to be able to move away for both practical and financial reasons.

Commercial Sector pay is being hit by austerity measures too. In the three months to November 2011 total pay in the private sector rose by 2% on a year earlier (again, a real terms pay cut). The lowest paid are also being forced to suffer more pay restraint than those on higher earnings as shown by the widening gap between the highest and lowest paid employees in the commercial sector.



3 How the cuts affect women

Pensions

Women make up two thirds of the UK's poorest pensioners. The government's decision to change from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the usually lower Consumer Price Index (CPI) as the measure of inflation for uprating pensions will push many into further poverty. Meanwhile, women yet to retire are hit hard by changes to the state pension age.

Broken career patterns and low paid part time work mean that many women have been unable to save for a full occupational pension. This means they have been relying on the state pension. For those born between 1950 and 1961 there is a gradual move to age 66 state pension age for all, and for those born after April 6 1961 a 67 state pension age moving to age 68 for younger members. These ages may well change. Many women find this a dispiriting prospect.

Paying higher pension contributions in both the civil service and some private sector schemes means women often think about opting out of their occupational pension scheme. This is unlikely to be in their best interests, but some women may feel they cannot afford to pay for their future. This could mean poverty in old age and a further burden on the welfare state in the future.

Jobs

Again, because women constitute 65% of the public sector workforce, government job cuts through privatisation and closures affect women most.



The Office for Budget Responsibility predicts the government will axe 710,000 public sector jobs in the coming years and it is estimated by commentators that twice as many women as men will lose their jobs in the public sector because of their preponderance in lower grades and proportion in the workplace. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) the private sector will also lose 650,000 jobs as a result of public spending cuts.

With December 2011's figures showing women's unemployment at its highest in 23 years (rising 16% since the end of the recession whereas men's was stagnant), and youth unemployment hitting one million, it is far from clear where jobs will come from without investment in the economy instead of cuts.

Photos: above: Roy Peters right: Guy Bell

Other issues

Of course, while our national campaign centers on pay, pensions and jobs, there are a number of other issues that impact on women that you might want to raise with your elected representative, including the impact of cuts to services and benefits that women particularly rely on.

Cuts to services

Services being cut include children's services, social care services (a crucial issue given women are more likely to be carers), support for pregnant women, domestic violence and trafficking services, and legal aid (which it is estimated will be denied to nearly half of applicants who have suffered domestic violence).

Benefit cuts

- Child benefit has been frozen
- The health in pregnancy grant has been abolished
- The sure start maternity grants will be limited to the first child
- Several disability benefits are being cut and access unfairly restricted through bad assessments (the government has made being a disabled woman, a poverty trap)

If you want to raise the issue of service cuts with your elected representative, make some enquiries about the detail locally with the council and advocacy organisations. Having the local up to date information on service cuts will strengthen your point and empower you for the meeting.



4 What you can do...

Actions for the campaign: whether you have three minutes or a couple of hours to dedicate, there are many things you can do to support this campaign: **1** Take a photo **2** Make a 20 second video **3** Send a pre-written email to your politician **4** Meet your politician **5** Contact your local media **6** Join or create a campaigning group

1 Take a photo

Print off the A4 campaign slogan poster from our web page pcs.org.uk/iwd2012 and take a picture of yourself holding it up, along with any girl or young woman campaigning as part of the international theme. Send it to natasha@pcs.org.uk and we will upload them on the PCS flicker account*

2 Make a 20 second video

Using a video phone, send a short video clip (maximum 20 seconds) of you talking about the impact of the cuts on yourself or women you know (if you are a man taking part). Send it to natasha@pcs.org.uk and we will upload it on the PCS flicker account. *Details and conditions apply to videos and pictures submitted. Please see pcs.org.uk/iwd2012

3 Send a prewritten email

It takes just three minutes to send a prewritten campaign email to your elected political representatives using our simple online tool. The prepared text in the email outlines the issues of concern and asks the politician to support the campaign in specific ways.

4 Meet your politician

A face to face meeting is the most effective way of persuading a politician to support your campaign. Use the contact information in this section to arrange an appointment.

If you live in one of the devolved nations, you can choose to meet your MP and/or your devolved political representative(s).

Assuming you don't want to meet them all, be aware that civil service pay and pensions remain the responsibility of the UK government so MPs are best lobbied on these issues (although the devolved administrations control the pay of workers employed by them).

Of course, you might prefer instead to meet your devolved political representative(s), particularly if you believe your MP is unlikely to be helpful.

In that case, you can simply send your MP a campaign email (found at pcs.org.uk/iwd2012). It takes three minutes, and means the decision makers on the main campaign issues are targeted. You can then meet your devolved political representative and raise the issues of regional/local pay (as

the consequences could be catastrophic for their constituents and the local economy), and local service cuts.

Do remember that you can either make an appointment to see your politician in the assembly/parliament during the week or at their advice surgery (often held at weekends). Advice surgeries are normally located in your local area and held outside normal working hours to make them more accessible. Almost every politician, including MPs representing constituencies in the devolved nations, offers this service.

Your Member of Parliament (MP)

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

A lobby has been arranged by PCS on 7 March for IWD. If you would like to join in and are able to meet your MP in the Westminster Parliament that day, please



Photo: Andy Aitchison

NOTE If you plan to see your politician at the parliament or assembly (rather than at a local surgery), please join the coordinated PCS lobbies taking place. Check the website pcs.org.uk/iwd2012 for information or email natasha@pcs.org.uk, for details.

check our webpage for details before arranging your meeting.

You can check who your MP is and get their email address by calling the House of Commons Information Office on 020 7219 4272, or checking the parliamentary website, parliament.co.uk. To make an appointment with your MP, telephone the House of Commons switchboard on 020 7219 3000 and ask to be put through to their office.

Your Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP)

The Scottish Parliament, Holyrood, Edinburgh EH99 1SP

You can check who your MSP is and their email address by logging on to the Scottish Parliament website www.scottish.parliament.uk/ and insert your post code, or you can call the Parliament's Public Information Office on 0131 348 5000. To make an appointment with your MSP, telephone the Public Information Office and ask to be put through to their office

4 What you can do...

Your Welsh Assembly Member (AM)

National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA

A lobby has been arranged by the Wales TUC on 7 March for IWD. PCS is participating so if you are able to meet your AM(s) at the Assembly that day, please check our webpage for details before confirming times.

Everyone in Wales is represented by four AMs – one constituency member and four regional AMs. It is your choice whether you meet with one or more of them. To find out who they are and their email addresses, visit <http://www.assemblywales.org/memhome.htm> or telephone the Assembly Public Information line on 0845 010 5500 and ask to be put through to the office to make an appointment.

Your Northern Ireland Assembly Member (MLA)

Northern Ireland Assembly, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX

You can check who your MLA is and their email address by looking on the Assembly website www.niassembly.gov.uk/Your-MLAs/ To make an appointment, call the communications office at the Assembly on 028 9052 1137 and ask to be put through to your MLA's office

When meeting your politician

Be clear, courteous and brief. Describe the impact of the cuts on you personally - you can use the PCS pensions calculator to see how much money you will lose - and let your politician know exactly what you want them to do. Remember, while they might not be sympathetic to our campaign, they are likely to be concerned if they see how the cuts to pay, pensions and jobs affect their constituency.

Below is a suggested order to things you might want to say:

- **Introduce yourself** and say where you live and work
- **Thank her or him** for seeing you
- **Outline** the 3 main campaign issues of pay, pensions and job cuts (and service or benefit cuts you are concerned about)

Ask the politician if they will:

- Speak in (or request) a debate** in their assembly/parliament about the impact of proposals for regional/local pay and cuts to pay, pensions and jobs on women
- Write to Ministers** about the impact of cuts to pay, pensions and jobs on women and urge them to take action or urge action via national party structures (if they raise the issue of devolved powers)
- Ask a question** in the assembly/parliament about the impact of cuts on local services that affect women
- (MP specific) **ask them to sign EDM number 2649**, tabled by Caroline Lucas MP, on the PCS IWD campaign (EDMs are petitions to



government that can only be signed by backbench MPs)

- Thank them** for their time and ask to be kept regularly updated with copies of responses they receive from Ministers and other decision makers.

Following the meeting drop the politician a note to thank them for their time and remind them of what they promised to do and to keep in contact.

Finally, it is important that PCS knows which politicians are supportive. After your meeting, please contact the campaigns unit on campaigns@pcs.org.uk or 020 7801 2820 with news.

5 Contact your local media

Write to your local paper to get people talking and thinking about the campaign issues.

'Letters to the editor' is the most read section of a local paper, and its reach into the local community means some people write in regularly to get their message out. You will find the address and name of the editor on the same page.

Tips

- Add local flavour to your letter by talking about the impact of cuts to women in the area
- If you are comfortable doing so, mention the impact of cuts on you personally
- Keep the letter brief (around 250 words), and to the point

Calling into a radio chat show is another effective way to spread the word

Tips

- Phrase your three main campaign messages as simply as possible
- Repeat your messages as often as possible
- Give local examples to illustrate the impact of cuts
- Be ready to mention the alternative to cuts including tax justice (details can be found in the 'There is an alternative' booklet available on the pcs website)

6 Join or create a campaigning group

Contact your local trades council and women's advocacy groups to check if there are any active campaigning groups looking at women's equality. If there aren't any, start one! Get some enthusiastic people to contact all potentially interested individuals and organisations. Once you've formed the group, work out your key priorities, agree a strategy, pool knowledge and resources and have regular campaign meetings to keep the momentum going throughout the year. IWD is important, but real change is only possible through ongoing action.

5 Useful websites and resources

PCS International Women's Day 2012

Dedicated pages with lobby events, downloads, detailed briefings on the campaign issues, member's stories and more:

pcs.org.uk/iwd2012

International Women's Day

The official website for IWD, you can register any events you might be holding here and download the official logo:

internationalwomensday.com/

TUC

An invaluable, comprehensive and detailed toolkit from the TUC covering all aspects of the cuts:

tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/138/WOMENANDCUTSToolkit.pdf

The Fawcett Society

The Fawcett Society has campaigned for equality between women and men since 1866, is a fantastic source of useful stats and facts: **fawcettsociety.org.uk**

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this campaign booklet and we hope you will get involved.
Women speaking out, not cut out.