

# Up in ARMs

The journal for all **PCS associate and retired members**

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## View from the chair

As I write this short note, it hardly seems possible that more than 12 months have elapsed since the new ARMs national committee was elected.

In the intervening time, we have met with senior national officers at PCS HQ, established a national ARMs blog and Facebook page, spoken for the first time at 6 group conferences, revamped and issued two editions of our journal, Up in ARMs, (the last edition of which was circulated in hard copy form to all 11,000 members of the group) held a successful annual forum in June and introduced procedures whereby regional ARMs committees can formally raise matters of concern with the national ARMs committee on a regular basis.

And yet, a lot remains to be done. If you are reading this note, it is likely that you are one of only 37% of the total



ARMs membership who has access to electronic communications. In stark terms, that means over 60% of ARMs members do not receive regular communications from PCS. While we need to accept that, as a union, adopting electronic methods of communications with members is quick, easy and financially sustainable, it does not necessarily deal with those members who, for whatever reason,

have not or do not want to embrace such technology.

The ARMs national committee is, as a matter of priority, seeking to improve the ways in which we provide information to members. In addition, we are also looking at ways in which we will be able to increase the number of PCS members who retire or leave employment and remain within the union as ARMs members.

I hope that you find the articles and news items in this edition of Up in Arms both useful and informative. If you have any suggestions to improve the service you get from your union, use the Facebook group or blog, or even write to us (details are on the last page). Let us work together to try and improve what PCS can do for you.

**Phil Green, ARMs national chairperson**

## ARMs Facebook launch

Delivering on a commitment to ARMs members and a promise to PCS group conference delegates, the ARMs national committee has now set up a Facebook closed group – [PCS associate and retired members \(ARMs\)](#).

Launched on 6 September the group currently has 104 members. We would welcome more people joining to share details of their meetings, information, campaigning activity and any items of interest to ARMs members, PCS and the wider trade union movement. Click [here](#) to go to the group.

As a closed group any person can find the Facebook group by searching the name and can request to join the group.

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They cannot join unless they are approved by one of the administrators and only current group members can see posted content. Hence the privacy of the group is maintained.

Articles on the Facebook group include: how to order your PCS diary (see the pinned post); a petition from

the Fairtrade Foundation on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership; several posts about the WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) campaign which is supported by PCS; a petition on the crisis in social care; an article from the Guardian which states ‘Shutting down jobcentres is the austerity era’s most underhand cut yet’; a victory for a zero-hours worker gaining the right to be paid holiday pay; support for the RMT dispute to keep guards on trains; campaigning to defend the NHS; organising support from ARMs members for the scrap the cap pay campaign, and much more.

## Editor's notes

Welcome to this edition of Up in ARMs. In this edition we want to remind members of the various ways you can receive information and share your views on issues. We also cover news on the campaigning activities that ARMs members are involved in and highlight the huge injustice metered out to many thousands of retired miners. We hear from a young members representative on the importance of us working together to tackle intergenerational challenges,

War on Want shares its views on the Paradise papers, we learn how to get involved in the WASPI campaign and hear more about the Labour party's consultation on the future state pension.

We would like you to let us know your views on any of the issues covered, or indeed on any other issues you would like to share your opinion on. Contact details are on the back page. **Eddie Spence**

# Anti-austerity march at Tory conference

ARMs members from Greater Manchester met up with Yorkshire and Humber ARMs members at the start of the march on Liverpool Road, Manchester. John Hadfield ARMs North West regional organiser reports on the event.

Thousands of people congregated in Castlefield Bowl, Manchester, to attend a rally and march organised by The People's Assembly against austerity on 1 October. Members of PCS and PCS ARMs were part of this rally. The route passed close to the venue where the Conservative party



conference was taking place.

Speakers from campaign organisations, political parties and trade unions took to the stage. They included former Coronation Street actress Julie Hesmondhalgh, Justice for Grenfell campaigners, NHS

workers, Unison members, our general secretary Mark Serwotka and Labour politicians.

Mark claimed Conservative policies were "literally killing people," referring to cuts to health and safety rules and the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy.

As the march progressed through Manchester it was supported by people on the streets and also local residents waving various banners against austerity and the Tory party's policies from their apartment windows.

## WASPI campaign

National committee member Jacquie Hadfield on why PCS supports the WASPI campaign

In 1995, the government decided to increase the women's retirement age from 60 to 65 for women born in 1950 or after. However, they didn't write to those affected to tell them about this until 2012 or 2013. About 2.5 million women were taken by surprise and did not have adequate financial arrangements in place. Some women refused to accept this and starting with just five women the WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) movement was established.

Their stance always had a ring of fairness about it. Now there is great cross-party support for the campaign, and leading up to the budget there is hope that a victory is in sight.

WASPI co-founder Anne Keen said: "WASPI is delighted with the cross-party support and the significant support from within the Conservative party. The chancellor has the ideal opportunity to



address this injustice in the forthcoming budget."

The ARMs national committee and ARMs forum agreed to support the WASPI campaign. The issues have been in the news and were highlighted on the Tonight television programme on 19 October. Several notable MPs support the WASPI women, including Andrew Gwynne MP, shadow secretary of state for communities and local government, who was the first person to raise the

WASPI concerns in parliament and set up a parliamentary group with Barbara Keeley MP, shadow minister for mental health and social care. The parliamentary group first met on 21 October 2015. Two years have passed and the hardship and fight continues.

Please join the fight by writing to your MP. You can see more information, links to other campaign sites and use/adapt the draft letter on the PCS Blog at [ARMs national blog](#). It has also been pointed out that women born in the 1960s have been affected by the rise in the pension age with little notice to add to their retirement income. If this is relevant to you please adapt the letter to ask your MP to look at the plight of women born in the early 1960s. You can also sign the petition at: [petition.parliament.uk/petitions/200088](http://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/200088). If you don't know who your MP is you can find out at: [theyworkforyou.com](http://theyworkforyou.com)

# ARMS and PCS young members

Each year ARMs is asked to talk to members attending the PCS national young members forum. Following this year's event Up in ARMs invited Claire Keogh – PCS young members representative from the northern region to share her views: "It was wonderful to have Sheila Banks and Eddie Spence speak at our national young members' seminar this September, they really accentuated the need for our two networks to work together.

The media is determined to pit us against each other – they'd have you believe that every person over 50 single-handedly brought down the economy, and that every person under 30 is a lazy entitled brat with no work ethic. Their narrative doesn't make sense, and as a network we're committed to building bridges between our two networks and refusing to buy into the idea we should blame each other for societies problems.

As young workers, planning for our future sometimes feels impossible. Between pensions that we don't understand, houses that we can't afford and wages that don't increase with inflation, we need help from ARMs more than ever. We want to fight for your causes, and for you to fight for ours.

To name just a few potential



**Above: Young members at the weekend Forum**

examples, we can utilise your experience with public speaking, personal cases and many other things. You can utilise our expertise with social media and technology. If you'd like to get involved in any of our campaigns, or get us involved in any of yours, please have a look at what we are doing on the [PCS website](#) and please get in touch with us at [youngmembers@pcs.org.uk](mailto:youngmembers@pcs.org.uk)."

**Editor's note:** The October meeting of the ARMs national committee agreed unanimously to offer PCS young members space to comment in all our



**Above: Sheila Banks – ARMs Y&H regional chair delivering her speech**

future editions of Up in ARMs. ARMs regional committees will also be encouraged to establish links with their young member counterparts to establish how we may work more closely together.

## Registering your email address with PCS

If you have an email address but have not yet registered it with PCS we would encourage you to do this confidentially via the [PCS website](#). If you have a personal email address registered with PCS that will allow us to keep you informed of local and national PCS ARMs issues that may be of interest to you.

To register confidentially via the PCS national website please follow the steps below:

- Go to the PCS website [pcs.org.uk](http://pcs.org.uk)

- Click on the members area at the top right of the home page to take you to member login
- Click on the last bullet point 'Register online today' to use our online services. Complete the membership information requested – you will need either your membership number or your National Insurance number to set up your personal log in details (username and password).

Once you have completed and

submitted your login details you will be able to access PCS iMembership and update any of your personal membership details such as a change of address if and when they change. Your email address will then be added to the national PCS Membership database.

The database is managed by PCS staff at PCS Headquarters in accordance with data protection legislation. ARMs both regionally and nationally can then send information to you by email via PCS HQ.

# PCS deputy president Kevin McHugh writes

First, I would like to thank ARMs members for supporting our campaigns to break the government's public sector pay cap and against office closures. That support is greatly appreciated by the national executive committee (NEC).

These challenges are obviously high on our unions agenda as they not only impact upon the jobs and living standards of our members but also on the essential services our members provide to the public. Of course we have already witnessed government efforts to sow division by commenting on the 'deserving' public sector workers. By omission they fail to comment on those they deem less deserving. We have major challenges ahead to break this pernicious pay cap. Many ARMs members will have been involved in doing that in the past when seeking to change government pay policy. It is good to know that we can rely on your support when facing the challenges ahead.

I write this contribution before the 2017 budget statement and one can already predict that whatever the budget content it will be used as a platform to re-ignite the phoney 'war



**“I look forward to ARMs working closer with PCS young members to benefit from all of your respective knowledge and experience”**

between the generations'. This continues to be a convenient smoke screen for the Tory government and their lobby group friends in organisations such as the Taxpayers' Alliance to attack young and older generations alike. We can expect also that the media will round on this issue.

Exposing the tax dodgers laid bare by the Paradise Papers may have become too hot to handle as the rich and powerful circle their wagons to defend their wealth and privilege.

It is good to see that this edition of Up in ARMs includes a contribution from PCS young members who are at the forefront of the challenges in our rapidly changing workplaces. I look forward to ARMs working closer with PCS young members to benefit from all of your respective knowledge and experience.

In an environment where a weak government does not even know what its ministers are doing around the world it is important that we continue to campaign on behalf of all our members whether young or old in work or retired.

As ARMs liaison officer I keep the NEC up to date on the campaigns and activity of ARMs. I stress the value of the work you are involved in, particularly on the state pension, NHS and the future of social care. I stress the importance of our unions continued support for that work which affects both current and future generations.

# Remember your ARMs membership benefits

The association will ensure the voice of retired members is heard throughout the union and in the wider political arena and pensioner movement.

and pensioner movement. There are also a range of membership services which PCS provides for associate and retired members.

These include:

- Legal assistance and advice



- Professional advice service
- Financial services
- Helplines for legal, medical, debt, domestic violence and breast cancer advice
- Holiday and travel club
- Shopping discounts
- Free will service
- Copies of the ARMs newsletter
- Assistance through the PCS benevolent fund.

Visit the ARM's blog

In April the national committee launched the ARMs blog. If you've never heard of one it is a regularly updated website or web page, run by our ARMs national communications team, written in an informal/conversational style where you post your own comments on issues. Why

not have a look now at:

[pcs-arms.blogspot.co.uk](http://pcs-arms.blogspot.co.uk)  
You can register to receive blog updates by submitting your email address in the box marked 'Email address' on the right hand side of the screen, a verification message will be sent to you, and once you respond to this message, you will be emailed each post as it appears on the blog.

# The great pension robbery

One of the “Greatest financial deceptions ever to take place in the UK” is taking place right now.

Many ARMs members will have vivid memories of the 1984/5 miners’ dispute and will be alarmed to know that former mineworkers can no longer trust the government with stewardship of their pensions.

Up in ARMs asked Mick Newton from the UK Mineworkers Pension Association (MPA) to explain the background to this scandal. Mick’s explanation will no doubt shock many members and hopefully encourage more support for the MPA campaign.

Mick explains that since 1987 successive governments have taken nearly £9 billion from the Mineworkers Pension Scheme and this effectively slashes our pensions in half. This injustice affects 200,000 former mineworkers, their widows and dependents across the UK’s former coalfield areas.

When we add to the equation the horror of 10,000 Mineworkers Pension Scheme members dying every year or 30 every single day, you will understand the urgency for a solution to stop this pension deception.

This government deception is via a government guarantee that entitles the government to take 50% of our investment surpluses and 20% of the rest through taxation, leaving the Mineworkers Pension Fund with less than

40% of any investment surplus.

If we have a bad year and fall into a deficit, then the government loans the pension scheme our own money from an investment reserve fund at payday loan style interest rates.

“The miners have had a good deal”, I hear politicians say on a regular basis, tell that to the widows who are dying in pension poverty and tell that to the miners who are now reliant on their families to help and support them.

The truth is that since 1987 British Coal and the government have not put one single penny into the pension scheme and have taken £4.7 billion by means of a contribution holiday and £4.2 billion from our investment surpluses.

Some of those billions have been used to pay the mineworkers their redundancy, their compensation for Pneumoconiosis (black lung) and for regeneration schemes in former coalfield areas.

## Is it right?

- Should the mineworkers pay for the effects of pit closures from their own pensions?
- Why are the miners having to pay for their own and their community well-being from their pension fund?
- Shouldn’t compensation and regeneration schemes be paid for from the general tax take?



Well normally that is exactly what happens and that's why we feel very strongly that successive governments are punishing the miners all the way to the grave.

Decisions are taken involving billions of pounds with no transparency and very little accountability.

We are currently writing to all MPs and local councils for support to right this wrong by reviewing this spurious 50/50 government guarantee.

We are therefore calling for a Treasury select committee enquiry into the mineworkers pension scheme as this is the best possible way forward to obtain financial redress.

May I call on your readers to write to their local MP requesting they sign Early Day Motion 235 (mineworkers pension scheme) to support our pension plight? If you don’t know who your MP is you can find out [here](#).

For further updates please join our [Facebook Page Mineworkers Pension Association](#).

# War on Want: Paradise and tax avoidance

In a week of scandals hitting Westminster, it is clear that for far too long the rich and powerful have played by their own rules. Owen Espley, senior economic justice campaigner for War on Want was invited to share his views.

Whether through secretive tax dodging schemes or biased trade rules that favour big business over people, the system is skewed in favour of the rich, at the expense of the poor. It’s unfair, and undemocratic.

For decades we’ve stood for an economic system based on justice, equality and rights, not exploitation

and profit. Here’s our take on the latest tax avoidance scandal.

Like me, you will have seen the leak of secret documents, known as the Paradise Papers, splashed all over the news. They expose the murky network of “offshore finance” and tax havens that enable the rich to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, taxes that could help end austerity by contributing to our hospitals, schools, and other public services.

War on Want research has exposed how tax dodging multinationals like **Apple** leave a trail of human rights in

their wake, and how Zambia loses \$3 billion a year from corporate tax dodging despite having abundant natural resources. Poverty is political. The massive inequality in the world today is the result of decisions by politicians to strip ordinary people of their power and hand it to corporations and elites.

The UK government can and must act now to abolish the UK’s own network of tax havens and take decisive action to ensure multinationals and the wealthy pay their fair share of tax. In solidarity.

# Out and about with ARMs

ARMS members have also been out and about supporting local and national campaigns

## Office closures campaign

ARMS members were out in support of strikers from Eastern Avenue jobcentre on 10 November along with striking PCS members and members of the DWP group executive committee.

## Supporting local anti-fracking campaign

ARMS North West reports: "There was a great turnout at Preston New Road from supporters of the local anti-fracking campaign. Supporters included PCS, Unite, UCU, Manchester TUC pensioners, BFAWU, Unison, and the NEU.

PCS national executive committee member Clara Paillard gave a brilliant and inspiring speech and there was a friendly but determined atmosphere to stop fracking. The suggestion to have a march and rally in London was met with great enthusiasm."

**We encourage every ARMs region to let us know what is going on where you live and send Up in ARMs some photographs of the campaigns you are involved in.**



# Northern Ireland ARMS

All Northern Ireland ARMS members are invited, particularly if you have not attended a meeting before, to come along to our annual general meeting which will be held on Thursday, 25 January 2018 at 2 Donegall Street Belfast from 12.30pm to 4pm.

If you can't make it but would still be interested, please contact: [margaret.galloway@ntlworld.com](mailto:margaret.galloway@ntlworld.com) or by phone on 02890 289246.

Margaret represented PCS at the Age Sector Platform Pensioners' Parliament on 26/27 October 2017 at the Europa Hotel. The following is a brief summary of the event and you can hear more at the AGM.

The parliament included presentations and debates on a range of issues followed by questions from the floor including the following:

- Scamwise – included the launch of the Northern Ireland Pensioners

Parliament (NIPP) Scams Report followed by an expert panel discussion with representatives from Trading Standards, Action on Elder Abuse NI, the H&SC Board, PSNI and scam victim Erika Murray. There was a short video with horror stories from older people who had been scammed.

- Health and social care – with keynote speaker Deirdre Heenan of Ulster University in discussion with an expert panel consisting of MLA, patient and client council and Department of Health representatives.
- Campaigns and lobbies with politicians both at Stormont and Westminster – Age Sector Platform (ASP) public affairs manager Seamus Lynch explained how ASP worked and stressed the importance of the Westminster trip where we met not only Westminster MPs but others with an interest in NI affairs including the chairs of various

committees and SNP members.

- On transport – Involved keynote speakers from the Belfast Hub Project and IMTAC. The Community Transport Association NI gave a presentation entitled How can Community transport assist older people? revealing that the biggest problem now facing community transport was the requirement that all drivers of community transport vehicles must have the appropriate training and obtain permits.
- Brexit The NIPP Brexit Report was by Alison McKenna, ASP communications manager. The keynote speaker was from Queen's University Belfast and spoke about Brexit and its possible impact on older people in NI. This was followed by a panel discussion with Alliance, SDLP, UUP and DUP representatives. Sinn Fein were invited but unable to attend.

# Labour party consults on future state pension

The last edition of Up in ARMs reported on the Labour party's plans to consult widely on the future state retirement pension. The ARMs national committee will be consulting all ARMs regions on the key questions Labour is raising to include our experiences into our unions response. If you have any views on any of the following issues you can email your comments to your ARMs regional secretary to consider including them in the regions response – contact details are on the back page.

Labour argues that "older people have been badly let down by the Tories by not promising to protect the state pension triple lock and winter fuel payments, threatening a tax upon older people with care needs, failing to provide transitional protection to women born in the 1950s who have had the increase in their state pension Age (SPA) accelerated and announcing that they will be accelerating the increase in the SPA to 68."

The Labour party contrasts this with their manifesto pledge to retain the triple lock and Winter Fuel Payments, as well as provide support for 1950s born women by extending Pension Credit and exploring options for further transitional protections and rejecting the accelerated increase in the SPA to 68 committing to leave the state pension age at 66 while they examine options for a flexible retirement policy.

Labour argues "As part of the Labour Party's commitment to ensuring dignity and security in older age, we are launching a national conversation across the country to discuss how we can best protect and improve the state pension. This process will complement the Pensions Commission which Labour established at the beginning of 2017. Views are being sought from pensioners groups, trade unions, local authorities, WASPI groups and charities."

Key questions that the consultation is asking include:

- What is your current experience of the State Pension (SP) and other



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social security support for pensioners such as Winter Fuel Payments, Pension Credit?

- What are your views of the value/adequacy of the state pension? What are your views on the triple lock guaranteeing a minimum of 2.5% annual increase to the state pension, or higher if average earnings or CPI inflation are above 2.5%?
- How have you been affected by recent accelerated/increases in the SPA and what are your views on the current plans to increase the state pension age to 68?
- What could be reasonable transitional arrangements for 50s

born women and men who fell victim to the accelerated increase in the SPA and timing of the new state pension?

- Do you support proposals for a more flexible approach to the state pension age, one which recognises the contribution that people have made in their working lives such as a flexible retirement age based on healthy life expectancy and do you have a view on what a flexible state pension age should look like?

- How do we help low income groups to make higher contributions to an occupational pension to complement their state pension income and how do we extend occupational pension provision to people who are self-employed or who do not earn a wage but make huge sacrifices for society as they fulfil caring and other responsibilities?

Labour has given the following commitment on the Consultation: "Through this consultation we will seek to incorporate your views into evidence-based policies for dignity and security in older age. Together with your help we can transform our state pension system."

It is good to be consulted so ARMs members need to take advantage of the opportunity.

# ARMs national committee and ARMs regional secretaries

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## ARMs 2018 regional/nation AGMs

Annual general meetings are open to all PCS ARMs members in the region and we encourage you to come along and get involved. Contact details of your ARMs regional secretary can be found below and 2018 AGM dates provided by your region to date are as follows.

### Northern Ireland

Thursday, 25 January, 2018: at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions premises – 2 Donegall Street Belfast, from 12.30 – 4pm

### South East

Wednesday, 14 February, 2018 at PCS HQ, 160 Falcon Road, Clapham, London SW11 2LN from 1.30pm to 3.30pm. Guest speaker: Kevin McHugh – PCS deputy president and ARMs NEC liaison officer.

### Northern

Friday 1 March 2018 at PCS Newcastle Office Transport House, John Dobson Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8TW.

### South West

Friday, 2 March, 2018: at the White Ensign Club, South Street, Exeter, EX1 1ED, from 1.30pm and aiming to end by 3.30pm.

### Wales-Cymru

Tuesday, 6 March, 2018 at Unite House, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9SD.

### Eastern

Thursday, 8 March, 2018: at the Meeting Room, Lower Ground Floor, Nelson Hotel, Norwich (situated opposite the rail station), from 12 noon to 2pm.

### Greater London

Thursday, 8 March, 2018: at PCS HQ, 160 Falcon Road London SW11 2LN, commencing at 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

### Yorkshire and Humberside

Monday, 12 March, 2018: at PCS Leeds Office, 3rd Floor, Town Centre House, Merrion Centre, Leeds, LS2 8LY, from 1pm to 3pm.

### North West

Tuesday 13 March 2018 at PCS North West

Office, 3rd Floor, Jack Jones House, 1

Islington, Liverpool L3 8EG, from 11.30 to 2.30pm

### Midlands Region

Wednesday, 21 March, 2018 at PCS Midlands Office, Unit 6 Holt Court, Heneage Street West, Birmingham B7 4AX, commencing at 2pm.

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### Send your letters to:

The editor, Up in ARMs, c/o general secretary's Office, 160 Falcon Road, London SW11 2LN. The deadline for the next edition is Friday 2 February 2018.

Email: [vice-chair@arms-pcs.org.uk](mailto:vice-chair@arms-pcs.org.uk)

The letters page is for members to exchange views. Publication of any letter does not imply support for the views of individual members, either by the union or the editor. Letters should be under 250 words and may be edited for length or clarity.