

Up in ARMs

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

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View from the chair



The next six months or so promise to be a watershed for ARMs. In May PCS 2018 Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) carried motion A55 instructing the national executive committee (NEC) to conduct a review of ARMs and the role it can play within the union. To ensure this step was supported by ARMs the 2018 ARMs forum carried a very similar motion unanimously.

This is an excellent opportunity for the ARMs national committee to engage with the NEC and explore the various ways in which ARMs can be supported and can support PCS in the future. It also provides the chance to progress some of the items discussed at the ARMs forum over recent years and on which little progress has been made with the NEC.

A key stumbling block which we have faced is that of communication with members. Readers of this article are amongst the 40% or so of ARMs members who have access to Up in Arms electronically. That means some 60% of our members do not have that

“Any increase in our overall membership is to be welcomed and strengthens our campaigning voice

opportunity. We have worked to try and impress upon the NEC the importance of communicating regularly with all ARMs members. This includes those who, for whatever reason, are not able to access the more instant methods of contact that the use of technology has brought to the forefront in recent years.

Another issue for the NEC and the ARMs national committee to tackle together is the topic of recruitment. Currently, we increase ARMs membership by about 750 members per annum. That number is an improvement on previous years but it is just a small percentage of the potential members we could and should be recruiting to ARMs each and every year. We need to explore all the possible methods by which we can persuade ordinary working members of PCS to continue to enjoy the benefits of membership once they leave their



employment, be that for retirement or any other reason. Any increase in our overall membership is to be welcomed and strengthens our campaigning voice.

Hopefully, the momentum provided by motion A55 will allow us to confront these issues in a meaningful way. It will be our intention to provide regular updates on the progress made via ARMs region/nation committees. To keep abreast of developments please make sure you read communications from your local committee over coming months and look out for the next edition of Up in ARMs in November.

Phil Green, ARMs national chairperson

EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the third edition of Up in ARMs in 2018. Thank you to those members and representatives who have been good enough to take the time to send in your thoughts on issues.

In this issue we aim to cover a range of topics that will be of interest including the national PCS pay campaign and what ARMs members are doing to support working PCS members. We know only too well how 'wage restraint'

can damage living standards today as well as the pensions that members quite rightly look forward to tomorrow. You will see opinions on housing policy and we are interested to know what you think. We hear from local ARMs groups on their activity and how our representatives fared at the annual NPC Pensioners' Parliament.

Some of the decisions made at this year's ARMs annual forum are

commented upon, however further information on the forum will be issued in the near future.

Our thanks go to all contributors and to members for your continued support for our union. I hope this edition provides some food for thought. Please let us know your thoughts. Contact details and the deadline for letters and articles are on the back page.

Eddie Spence

PCS vice president Kevin McHugh writes

I welcomed and enjoyed the opportunity to meet with delegates attending the ARMs annual forum in Liverpool on 20 June. I found the debates extremely interesting and was particularly seized by the wish of members and representatives to be part of a campaigning ARMs membership more closely linked to our union wide organisation and structures.

Part of my role as the NEC's liaison officer with ARMs is to make sure that NEC members understand the needs and aspirations of our ARMs membership and make sure we provide support. It is also important that we recognise the role played by ARMs members in supporting union wide campaigns and I want to thank all those ARMs members who helped during the national pay campaign ballot, particularly in staffing phone banks and leafleting workplaces. That support was and continues to be invaluable.

Our recent ballot of PCS members delivered the highest yes vote and turnout in the history of our union.

However, undemocratic, anti-union strike laws, implemented last year, will prevent strike action.

The ballot will send a strong message to the government that PCS members want a pay rise. However, the new legal requirements mean that unions not only have to show majority support for a strike, but that 50% of those balloted have voted.

Our campaign has made our union stronger, with thousands of new members and hundreds of new reps and advocates. Our members still deserve a pay rise, so the pay campaign will not end with this disappointing result. Our national executive committee agreed the next steps in the pay campaign include:

- writing to the Cabinet Office demanding urgent pay talks
- supporting and coordinating delegated groups and branches in pay negotiations
- fully supporting groups of members who wish to ballot for industrial action



at delegated level. We are determined to continue the campaign on pay this year; legally, through departmental talks and industrial action if necessary, and next year; through building our union so that if we need to ballot for strike action we can be certain that we will beat the 50% threshold. It is reassuring to know that ARMs members will support us in those efforts.

Election ID checks?

"We already knew that this policy was a solution looking for a problem, but now it looks like it will be an expensive one at that," so said Darren Hughes, chief executive of the ERS. ARMs national secretary Brian Herbertson explains why the ARMs annual forum shared those concerns. It comes after ministers vowed to press ahead with plans to extend trials of the scheme, despite hundreds of people being turned away from the ballot box during tests in several locations during May's local elections.

PCS ARMs is concerned about the new ID checks for voting that were trialled in 8 areas during local elections in May. Voters were required to produce different types of identity including a passport or driving licence. The 2011 census showed that only 46% of people over 85 held a passport and 50% of women over 70 did not have a driving licence.

Although there are a small number of proven cases of fraud with this we believe (to quote Labour's minister for voter



engagement – cat smith) the government is taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

The ARMs annual forum supported a motion from the South West region and agreed to work with the NPC to: seek feedback from NPC members in the trial areas, examine campaigns on this issue by other organisations and consider equality aspects including unfairly discriminating against older voters.

Some facts

A Cabinet Office paper quietly released just before the summer recess estimated national roll-out of the scheme could cost £20 million.

There were just 28 allegations of impersonation – the type of fraud ID is meant to fix – in 2017 which resulted in a single conviction out of 45 million votes.

Local authority election teams are already facing huge financial pressures after eight years of extreme Tory cuts and the government has no plans to address these concerns.

A Cabinet Office spokesperson said: "Evaluation from the May 2019 pilots will further inform how voter ID should work on a national scale, including costs and what approach will work best for voters and the taxpayer."

Government hypocrisy over pay ballot

Steve Ion ARMs national committee member reflects on the work of ARMs members in the North West supporting the recent PCS national pay ballot

We share the disappointment of PCS not achieving the 50% threshold in the recent pay ballot. The hypocrisy of the Tory legislation which demands this 50% threshold figure beggars belief when MPs and councillors are voted in on far less than this.

It was not through want of effort and dedication of PCS working representatives, staff and ARMs members. We applaud all their commitment in encouraging members to vote in the ballot.

ARMs members covered telephone banking, leafleting, attended pay protests and town committees to offer their support in whatever way the PCS required.

The enthusiasm for these tasks witnessed several ARMs members coming into activity for the first time and was inspirational to see.

We felt alongside our other colleagues that we did make a difference. Many members who were contacted by phone in particular were helped through the balloting process. This not only encouraged them to register their vote but also assisted with the process of requesting replacement ballot papers when needed. Our calls were always welcomed by members as a contact from their union.

Our work will also serve PCS well for future balloting as more accurate data was obtained from members as they had moved or changed contact details.

Helping with leafleting also helped ease the pressure on often hard pressed PCS branch and local reps who we were happy to work alongside us. It was particularly interesting chatting to members and is something we were only too willing to help with.

ARMs and working members together
These experiences can help inform our discussions in the forthcoming review of ARMs activities commented upon by our



ARMs members leafleting outside the Department of Education/Land Registry in Coventry



ARMs members helping on the telephone bank in PCS North West regional office

ARMs national chair earlier in this newsletter.

In looking back at our experience we all regarded it as a very enjoyable and positive experience. As predominantly non-working members we can continue to work to ensure we build our reputation as a major stakeholder in PCS. That we

can play a pivotal role simply by supporting our working colleagues in whatever way we can in what are extremely difficult times for working reps and members.

Our watchwords for our work were solidarity between ARMs members and working members – one union one fight!

Generations united

We are proud to work with PCS young members and in July we marched together at the Durham Miners' Gala. Here **Danielle Biscoe** shares her thoughts on the event and on the importance of our working relationship

"This year was my second year attending the Durham Miners' Gala, and once again I was not disappointed by the show of solidarity. Young members had the privilege of marching alongside ARMS members, which was an amazing experience, speaking to each other and sharing our experiences, which highlighted how far we had come as a union.

It was a privilege to march alongside ARMS to show that despite the age gap that young members and ARMS members can and do show support, solidarity with each other and expressed an interest in doing more alongside young members, which I know will be fully supported by our colleagues in ARMS and the young members.

It is important that we show that there is no divide between us and despite our differences of age and experience that we will and do support each other equally and without prejudice. The entire experience of Durham Miners Gala was fantastic, the atmosphere was amazing. Once we had finished the march we gathered in the field and listened to the speeches. Once again each individual speaker was powerful and emotive, and filled with passion. It was mind blowing seeing so many people showing support and solidarity for so many causes.

To top the whole experience off, when I was on the train home, I met the one and only Jeremy Corbyn. I had a wonderful chat with him about the 5% pay cap and PCS's fight the pay cap campaign. He seemed really interested about what we are doing as a union to support our members in getting the pay rise we deserve and that so many young members were involved and getting involved in politics and paving the way for others. He even agreed to do a little video showing support and solidarity to our pay campaign which I shared on all our social media platforms, and he wished us all the best of luck.



Mick McGrath and Eddie Spence from ARMs Yorkshire and Humber march with PCS young members at the Durham Miners' Gala

It was a privilege to march alongside ARMS to show that despite the age gap that young members and ARMS members can and do show support and solidarity with each other

It was an honour for us young members to show solidarity with our colleagues in ARMS, and I personally look forward to more opportunities to work closely with each other."

Sandra Durkin, ARMs National Treasurer will be addressing the national young members seminar in September and ARMs national committee member Jacquie Hadfield will have an article featured in the next young members national newsletter.

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.

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.

PCS campaigning at the Pensioners' Parliament

Our ARMs representatives attended throughout the parliament and also staffed our popular PCS stall highlighting PCS campaigning work and ARMs activities. The delegation also attended a number of workshops covering: understanding funeral poverty, tackling loneliness, The NHS at 70 still going strong, social care and making public transport accessible for all. A full report from the parliament will be circulated to ARMs regions and nations.

Fran Heathcote – PCS national deputy president and chair of the PCS DWP group was our keynote speaker at our well attended PCS campaigns fringe meeting on the first day of the Parliament.

Fran explained the challenges faced in the 'benefits justice' campaign and the fight against austerity. Since DWP 'crisis loan' payments were axed the use of foodbanks has increased rapidly. People's situations are made even worse by the government's closure of DWP offices that reduces the face-to-face help available to the public.

At Whitley Bay jobcentre, despite massive opposition from staff and the public to keep the office open, the jobcentre was still closed in what can best be described as a 'moonlight flit'. In Glasgow the office closures were made in the areas with the highest foodbank use. In the Welsh valleys all offices are marked for closure and no justification has been given. It has all the hallmarks of a deliberate plan to hit those most in need.

The introduction of Universal Credit is

Fran Heathcote – PCS national deputy president and chair of the PCS DWP group



ARMs Representatives (L to R) Jacquie Hadfield, Brian Gibson, John Hadfield and Brian Herbertson

“A fully-funded welfare and pension system is possible. Full employment allied with a fair taxation system and investment in proper housing are all part of what our society should be

having the effect of making many people poorer. It is testimony to the government's perverse logic that 40% of civil servants are in receipt of Universal Credit highlighting the low wages many members receive.

The harsher benefits 'conditionality' regime leaves people in work open to sanctions. One in four women are in low paid work and with the much publicised 'rape clause' for benefit for a third child women are made even more vulnerable by the current system.

Welfare cuts are a prelude to privatisation. People become used to expecting less and less from public services and the panacea inevitably offered is privatisation. People will make their own minds up about what a good deal that has been to other public services such the energy, water and rail industries, not to

mention the shambolic social care sector. Addressing social and welfare needs should not be a basis for making profits.

A fully funded welfare and pension system is possible. Full employment allied with a fair taxation system and investment in proper housing are all part of what our society should be. PCS will work with all those who are prepared to fight against austerity and for a decent society for all generations.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Remember you can keep in touch with ARMs online via:

[Facebook – PCS Associate and Retired Members \(ARMS\)](#)

Visit [ARMs national blog](#) or your ARMs regional/nation committee web pages at:

- [Eastern](#)
- [Midlands](#)
- [North West](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [South West](#)
- [Yorkshire & Humber](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Greater London](#)

Arms at anti-fracking protest

Jacquie Hadfield reports on ARMs anti-fracking campaign

On Saturday, 9 June PCS and PCS ARMs supported a trade union solidarity day at the Preston New Road fracking site. The campaign has continued for 6 years and it is a brilliant example of the determination of the campaigners to resist the fracking process at the site. It also demonstrates the determination of the company Cuadrilla to seek whatever measures they can to overthrow the democratic rights to peacefully protest so they can begin fracking.

Timing could not have been better to stage the solidarity day as Cuadrilla had won an injunction in Manchester just days before to keep protestors away from the opening to the site. When most had gathered we walked slowly down to the site to the supportive sounds of the horns from passing motorists. As there was no work taking place there was a comparatively small police presence. On most week days there can be 60 or more police officers, outnumbering the protestors and at times showing outrageous force to move them out of the way of site traffic.

After making our presence felt we walked slowly back to Maple Farm for speeches from the activists. PCS was well represented among the speakers. Chris Baugh (AGS) spoke about the plan to involve the local community and people in Blackpool in the campaign and to help them realise that the area can be regenerated by climate change jobs. Clara Paillard spoke about the amazing efforts of the protestors in slowing down the process towards drilling for shale gas; the wider impact of fracking and climate change and the fact that many countries now recognize the dangers and have banned fracking.

I spoke covering the impact of fracking on the local community; job losses and devaluing of property in the area; the detriment to the landscape and wildlife; the health risks; the flouting of democracy and the fact that what is happening goes against everything trade unionists stand for.

Since this event, a motion on climate change and older people has been passed at the ARMs national committee meeting on 25 July. It recognizes the support given by



AGS Chris Baugh addresses the protestors

PCS to the Preston New Road campaign and also the assistance that PCS ARMs can give in carrying out the terms of motion A91 carried at annual delegate conference on raising awareness of climate change issues. Greater Manchester ARMs members joined Frack Free Greater Manchester on Saturday 11 August in leafleting members of the public about climate change, the impact of fracking and drought.

Merseyside Pensioners Association (MPA)

Tony Mulhearn explains why the MPA is an inspiration to us all



The aims of the MPA ARE encapsulated in a motion which was adopted unanimously before the last general election

and included calling on Jeremy Corbyn to fight the election on the policies which propelled him to the leadership:

- The complete public ownership of the NHS
- The nationalisation of rail, energy and the Post Office as the first step of moving toward socialism
- Support for a crash council house building programme
- The repeal of the Tory anti-trade union legislation

e. The retention of the triple lock to protect pensions.

We called for organisation of mass rallies throughout the country, beginning in Liverpool, to mobilise maximum support for a Corbyn victory.

Collective responsibility – unity across generations

In addition to our priority of representing and empowering senior citizens, we believe we have a responsibility to use our collective experience to provide a better society for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. To this end we organised a very successful conference in Liverpool with the heading: 'Unite the Generations.'

This is the philosophy which informs all the activities of the MPA. We have been active in supporting the RMT, the FBU, the campaign

to save the Liverpool Women's Hospital, for a £10 an hour living wage, supporting UNITE's campaign for TU recognition in zero-hours outlets, against the privatisation of the NHS, and much more. The next campaign to be launched in the city centre will be in defence of free school meals.

We have been involved in the production of two very successful films one on 'austerity fights' and the next one soon to be published on 'pensioners united'.

We are well known and received across the Merseyside Labour movement. We call on all senior citizens on Merseyside to join our ranks and contribute to the activities of this campaigning body. If you require any further information, please contact Up in ARMs who can provide contact details.

Tony Mulhearn PCS ARMs member and MPA press officer

Housing crisis

Steve Ion shares his opinions on how future policy to tackle the housing crisis facing both young and old should be tackled

ARMs has recently contributed to a key review on housing policy called Home Sweet Home via our affiliation to the National Pensioners Convention (NPC). Our views highlighted the need for a massive council housing building programme where rents can be affordable, not left to the whim of the private sector who simply wish to maximise their profits. We also wish to ask the PCS nationally to contribute to the various Labour party reviews in particular the housing for the many green paper .

The building of council houses is an important demand for our retired and future retired members as recent figures show an increase in homelessness amongst the elderly. Many also have to continue to work as they are still saddled with mortgages until later age.

It is important that any housing policy deals with people in private rented accommodation to ensure fair rents where landlords can be held to account. For those who choose to remain living at home in later life it is important that their homes are suitably adapted to allow them to do so. For people who choose to move into care it is important that the system provides a fully-funded public sector provision; free at the point of use. All the evidence shows the positive impact on longevity of decent housing in old age.

The design of future housing estates is also important to tackle issues such as mobility, access to amenities and communal areas. It is also important to ensure that intergenerational communities are practical and viable. The benefits of different generations living as a community are immense not only for well being but also for integrating the younger generation.

At a recent North West pensioners meeting a debate was held around a motion submitted by PCS ARMs on housing



ARMs /North West Pensioners with Jim McMahon, shadow housing minister

“The building of council houses is an important demand for our retired and future retired members as recent figures show an increase in homelessness amongst the elderly

which was agreed unanimously. Labour's shadow spokesperson on housing, Jim McMahon, addressed the meeting. Jim was supportive of a large council house building programme and gave his support to the motion. Jim did accept the problems with housing associations – that basically you can't control what you don't own. While he did not see it as ideal that labour councils supported housing associations and also built on green field sites, he argued that local councils have been starved of funding by the government but

still have to deliver on house building programmes.

A future Labour government will reinvest in the council house building programme instead. Hopefully, in the words of Jeremy Corbyn they would commence a crash council house building programme.

It is important that we work through the NPC and PCS nationally, and that we continue to exert pressure on the Labour party and a future labour government to ensure housing is a priority and receives the funding and support it deserves.

NPC campaigns and comments

The NPC produces a regular monthly campaign bulletin and you can keep up to date by [clicking here to see the latest issue](#). You can also sign up to receive copies of the monthly Campaign! e-bulletin – simply send an email to: info@npcuk.org

What are your experiences and thoughts on current and future housing policy? Why not share them with Up in ARMs?

Putting the 'social' back into socialist

Jacquie Hadfield explains the Manchester group's recent activities

Our guest speakers have included members of the PCS NEC; shadow ministers; PCS young members; members from the PCS credit union; reps from local PCS disputes and other unions' campaigns; Chorley A&E hospital campaigners and a Franciscan friar.

We have supported PCS campaigns, demonstrations and picket lines against office closures; supporting the ACAS conciliators dispute; the EHRC dispute; attended meetings about the pay ballot and helped out on the pay ballot phone banks. We have also turned up to protests by UCU; Unite Fujitsu; Mears; RMT and the McDonalds 'McStrikers'.

"What a boring bunch they are" You may say. However our PCS young members speaker at the 2017 ARMs forum said that there is no intergenerational divide. He explained that Greater Manchester ARMs and the young members have much in common, which includes going to the pub after meetings. I was a little embarrassed by this but to quote another of our members "we like to put the social back into socialist". Now we try and put that into effect.

We have had history walks around Manchester; been to a beer festival; had a folk duo entertain us in a pub; been to a couple of folk evenings; had meals out and latterly had a fabulous afternoon/early evening of entertainment in July in a pub in Salford.

We have plenty of talent among ARMs members and decided to tap into this. We hired the Kings Arms (free room) from 2.00pm to 7.00pm and created an 'event' on our Facebook page. Neville Grundy came from Southport and Chris and Es Chorlton trekked from Oldham to sing and play guitars. Our committee member, Christina MacLachan, who is a member of the civil service choir, also



Es Chorlton and Neville Grundy

“The event was such a success that we have decided to hold another in October and to continue with them on a regular basis

did an impromptu couple of songs.

We had members attend who don't get to meetings, as well as members who do, to have a great time in our "afternoon of music and chat". The event was such a success that we have decided to hold another in October and to continue with them on a regular basis.

It would be interesting to learn what other social activity ARMs regions and local groups get up to. If it is not something you have tried it is definitely worth giving it a go.



Jacquie Hadfield

Hard work – yes; satisfaction – yes; enjoyment – yes, but boring – never.

ARMs review – a chance to build and grow

Assistant general secretary **Chris Baugh** shares his views on the forthcoming review of ARMs



I'd like to thank all ARMs members who participated in various activities around our national pay ballot. ARMs members across the UK got stuck into leafleting workplaces and regional phone banking sessions.

Many ARMs members are former PCS activists themselves and have a wealth of knowledge and background in trade union work and activity that we can tap in to.

With cuts to facility time and restrictions placed on union reps, we

can't underestimate the key role ARMs can play in promoting our union. Motion A55 passed at annual delegate conference this year, which calls on the NEC to conduct a review of ARMs services, provides a basis to build on the excellent work that has taken place so far and how we can expand the coverage of the network and the further potential that exists.

We want to explore how branches and regions can benefit from promoting ARMs membership and the potential to expand the ARMs network, not only in the union but lobbying for policies important to older and retired workers. We will be looking at

producing guidance for branches and regions on the role of ARMs and how they can utilise our network further.

Following this consultation we will be producing a report in time for AGMs next year for branches to discuss and consider possible motions to go to annual delegate conference next year.

I look forward to working with the ARMs national committee over the next year in building on the fantastic work of the ARMs network so far. From the reaction at various group conferences and national conference, there are no doubts our reps and members recognise the importance of our ARMs network.

Carillion collapse – who's making money?

The Carillion fiasco rumbles on exposing incompetent government and stewardship of taxpayers' money. No cries of outrage from the dodgy, self-appointed Taxpayers' Alliance but the following recent comments from parliamentary select committees scrutinising the fiasco speak volumes. We will continue to monitor these developments but who knows – prosecutions maybe?

The bill for you and I is currently estimated at £374 million.

Rachel Reeves MP, Chair of the BEIS committee, said: "Carillion was the gift that kept on giving – for the Big Four accountancy firms, at least, as they raked in millions for their audit and other work. The collapse of Carillion was a catastrophe for those who lost their jobs and the small businesses, contractors and suppliers left fighting for survival. The company's failure has left the taxpayer with a bloody nose too as we are all left on the hook for the vast sums needed to clean up this mess."

"The dice are loaded in the Big Four's favour. They make a killing in fees advising struggling companies how to turn them

“The bill for you and I is currently estimated at £374 million”

round and then they pocket millions tidying up when that advice fails. On Carillion, taxpayers are left to foot the multimillion pound bill for corporate failure. PwC, who profited from Carillion as it inched towards collapse, are expected to wring at least another £50 million from its ruins as the government appointed special managers to the insolvency, while thousands of smaller creditors will get nothing at all".

Commenting on today's NAO report, an investigation into the government's handling of the collapse of Carillion, Rt Hon Frank Field MP, chair of the work and pensions committee, said: "This invaluable report adds new weight to what we found: Carillion hoodwinked the government as they did many others who were so naive as to trust their published accounts. Philip Green, Richard Howson and Richard Adam were desperate to attribute their

company's explosion to some of its more exotic forays overseas. But the NAO's explanations of why common or garden UK public sector construction contracts failed betray extraordinarily negligent planning. Surely they could not have been so incompetent? It is difficult to shake the impression that this was conscious cash-chasing, bugger the long-term consequences and bugger the interests of suppliers, workers and pensioners.

"As special managers, with a contract to print money awarded without any competition, PwC will draw £50 million for six months' work. More money for PwC is less money for sub-contractors and the PPF. We have further questions about those payments—and how PwC's conflicts of interest arising from their long history of work on Carillion are being managed—and have written to PwC and the Official Receiver requesting further information. I am particularly concerned that PwC's conflicts could jeopardise action against individual directors."

You can see all 14 of the NAOs recommendations [here](#).

ARMS forum 2018

The 2018 annual ARMS forum was held in Liverpool on 20 June and was attended by delegates from 9 of our 11 ARMS regions/nations. ARMS national officer **Tracy Edwards** reports on decisions taken

Among 33 motions discussed it was agreed to call for autonomy over ARMS finances, for an increased budget, to work with the national executive committee (NEC) on a review of ARMS and for the ARMS national committee to continue to develop a closer working relationship with the national union.

Rule changes were agreed asking for future elections to be run annually in tandem with NEC/group elections and are now being considered by the NEC.

Delegates expressed a desire to improve the quality and frequency of communications with members, encouraging more members to record personal email information on the PCS imembership system.

Concerns about the new election ID checks were raised. It was noted that the pension gap for women is nearly 40%, mainly as a result of low-paid, part-time work and many part time workers not earning enough to pay NI contributions or qualify for auto enrolment pensions. The forum resolved to continue its support for the WASPI campaign and campaign vigorously within PCS, the NPC and the wider trade union movement.

The forum heard from PCS general

South West delegate Addy Purnell



Midlands Chair Mike Veric



secretary Mark Serwotka who thanked ARMS members and representatives for all our work in promoting and supporting PCS campaigns, and in championing the role of ARMS within our union. Mark gave a commitment to involve ARMS fully in the ARMS review agreed at this year's annual delegate conference. Mark spoke in detail about the pay campaign and the excellent relationship PCS has with the Labour party front bench. The ARMS forum agreed to do all we can to help build support for the pay ballot with many ARMS members involved in leafleting and phone banking.

Mick Shannon Yorkshire and Humber secretary



Wales Secretary Sue Watkins



The forum heard from Mark Serwotka General Secretary who thanked ARMS members and representatives for all our work in promoting and supporting PCS campaigns, and in championing the role of ARMS within our union

Concerns were raised about the Resolution Foundation report on a new intergenerational contract. In particular the report appeared to blame older workers for the economic problems facing young people today. Mark was asked if he could raise these concerns at the TUC general council.

Finally, the forum agreed: to support the establishment of a national care service; to scrap PFI in the care sector; the need for democratic rent controls; a mass programme of house building, ending privatisation of social housing that puts the needs of the many ahead of the few and genuinely provides affordable housing.

Full details of the motions carried at the forum can be found on the [ARMS section](#) on the PCS website

How to stay safe

We are happy to highlight the following issue raised with Up in Arms by one of our members in West Yorkshire

The recent case involving Safestyle UK, who breached the unfair trading regulations, has highlighted the often aggressive and persistent behaviour of sales personnel, trying to achieve a sale "at any cost to the consumer". These new regulations are intended to protect consumers from this type of aggressive salesmanship and also protect them from unfair or misleading trading practices.

The actions of a trader who tries to unfairly influence a consumer to sign a contract using tactics such as refusing to leave until a contract is signed, using threatening behaviour or not willing to accept 'no' for an answer is in contravention of the regulations.

According to Which? there are a number of rights to redress under the new regulations and it is worth familiarising yourself with your rights and obligations if you feel you have been unduly influenced or pressurised to enter into a contract with a company.

Other changes to the law intended to protect consumers includes the Consumer Rights Act 2015, which now also includes new rights when buying digital content. Moneysavingexpert.com

Trading Standards highlighted some of the aggressive practices used by the firm, including:

- A 50-year-old man from Rochdale who encountered an abusive sales canvasser on his doorstep who would not take no for an answer, refused to leave and then physically prevented closure of the door.
- An 84-year-old man from Rotherham who was given misleading information about the cost of the work. When he complained to Head Office and indicated he would cancel he was met with threats of 'trouble' if he tried to do so.
- An 88-year-old woman from Milnrow received a visit from a doorstep canvasser who, despite being told she

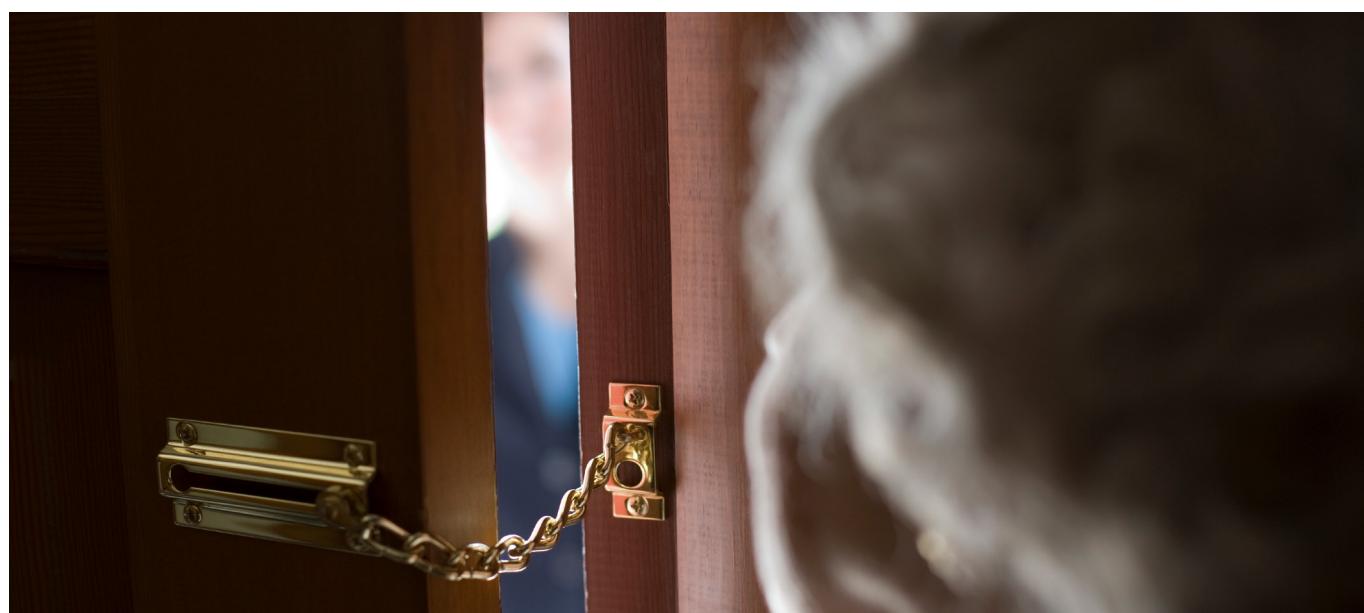
didn't want to buy anything, refused to leave until she had supplied a phone number.

The company claim to provide free, no obligation 12 month quotes, however WYTS say a 73-year-old man from Coventry was pressured for an immediate decision and told if he did so the salesman would share his employee discount – provided £400 was paid to him in cash.

The company also admitting using banned practices, including making persistent and unwanted sales calls and refusing to leave a consumer's home when asked to do so.

gives good advice in plain English and also provides templates for you to follow, if you need to complain.

Know and understand your basic consumer rights to protect yourself from unscrupulous traders.



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