# Civil servants strike over MHCLG office closures and rigid working policies



Civil servants employed at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have embarked on a nine-day strike period, beginning this week, in response to proposed office closures and changes in working conditions. The industrial action, organised by members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), is centred around opposition to the planned shutdown of the Newcastle office and other related workplace adjustments.

The strikes commenced this morning at the MHCLG office located in Newcastle's Citygate building. Joe Dale, the PCS branch representative at Newcastle, spoke to ChronicleLive detailing the union’s objectives. He explained that the strike aims not only to prevent the closure of the Newcastle office but also to compel management to reconsider recent mandates on office attendance and centralised changes in recruitment policies. “We're serious about protecting members and our terms and conditions, and this is a line in the sand,” said Dale. He further noted that strike mandates and actions short of strike have been authorised for all offices regarding the issues at hand.

Dale highlighted that staff have been instructed to attend the Darlington office three days per week following the proposed closure of Newcastle’s facility. He commented on this approach to office attendance, indicating a preference for flexibility: “Different people work well in different ways. Some people need to be in every day to work well, some three days a week, some work better predominantly from home with some office attendance.” He emphasised the union’s stance that individual working styles and output should be respected rather than enforcing a uniform attendance policy, which he said “doesn't work for anybody.”

The strike action extends beyond Newcastle, with additional walkouts reported in MHCLG offices in Birmingham, Exeter, Sheffield, Truro, and Warrington, where PCS members have started four days of industrial action. Fran Heathcote, PCS general secretary, criticised the government’s strategy of closing local offices whilst mandating strict office attendance. She described the approach as “reckless and regressive” and urged management to adopt strategic thinking that takes into account the important projects delivered by local offices and promotes greater flexibility for employees. Heathcote said, “They should start thinking strategically, considering the vital projects that local offices deliver for our communities, and enhancing flexibility to allow staff to choose how and where they perform their jobs in a manner that benefits both them and the communities we serve.”

In response to the ongoing industrial action and concerns raised by PCS members, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government stated that discussions with unions and staff have been taking place regarding proposals for office management. The spokesperson outlined plans to expand five offices outside of London while closing six others over the next two years as their leases expire. They assured that the department would maintain offices in every English region, as well as in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with affected staff able to continue in their roles.

The strike picket will continue at the Citygate office on Gallowgate in Newcastle, with a further demonstration scheduled for Wednesday morning. The union’s continued action reflects ongoing dissatisfaction among civil servants with the department’s proposed changes and a demand for greater negotiation and flexibility in working arrangements.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/professions/article/mhclg-pcs-strikes-office-closures-newcastle-birmingham-exeter-sheffield-truro-warrington> - Corroborates the nine-day strike action at Newcastle and four-day walkouts in Birmingham, Exeter, Sheffield, Truro, and Warrington over office closures and office-attendance policies.
* <https://todaysconveyancer.co.uk/mhclg-workers-strike-over-office-closures-and-mandatory-office-attendance/> - Supports the claim of strikes starting on 22nd April in multiple offices, including Newcastle's nine-day strike, and details PCS's opposition to mandatory 60% office attendance policies.
* <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/professions/article/mhclg-strike-dates-announced> - Confirms the strike dates (22 April–2 May for Newcastle; 22–25 April for other offices) and PCS's demands regarding office closures and recruitment policies.
* <https://www.workersliberty.org/story/2025-04-02/strike-vote-rayners-department> - Substantiates the strike mandate, with 80% voting for strike action and 90% for action short of strike, reflecting widespread staff dissent.
* <https://www.pcs.org.uk/news-events/news/pcs-members-mhclg-expand-their-strike-mandate-announce-strike-action> - Validates PCS's expanded strike mandate and the specific focus on Newcastle's closure threat, alongside broader recruitment and attendance policy grievances.