



Public and
Commercial
Services Union

Members' Briefing REVENUE & CUSTOMS GROUP

To: **All Members**

cc: **Branch Secretaries, Group Executive Committee, Equality Chairs, VOAC** (for info)

Can this Briefing be circulated via HMRC IT systems: **NO**

Website: **YES**

Action to be taken: **For the attention of all members**

Date: **29 April 2022**

Ref: **R&C/MB/020/22**

'RETURN TO OFFICE' IN WALES PCS challenges HMRC plans to circumvent Welsh Government guidance

- *HMRC announces four weeks' notice for RTO in Wales*
 - *PCS challenges announcement*
 - *Welsh Assembly members being approached*

On 28th April HMRC has issued four weeks' notice of return to office to all staff in Wales. PCS are extremely disappointed and concerned that HMRC have decided to issue this notice, which PCS firmly believe is in direct contradiction to current Welsh Government guidance. Throughout the pandemic HMRC have given the commitment that they would adhere to guidance from devolved administrations, however this is clearly now not the case.

Clear guidance for employers

As of the 18 April update, [Wales remains at Covid Alert Level 0](#). This has been the case since 28 January 2022 and is due to be reviewed on 9 May 2022. Further to this, the Welsh Government issued new guidance for employers on 18 April, PCS believe that this Public Health Advice gives a very clear steer:

[Public Health Advice for Employers and Businesses, issued by the Welsh Government regarding Alert Level Zero](#)

The guidance clearly states that:

"This advice covers public health control measures (previously referred to as "reasonable measures") which have been effective in mitigating risks during the pandemic. This includes:

- sufficient ventilation;
- robust cleaning and personal hygiene practices;
- regular training;
- **physical distancing**; (*our emphasis*)
- **enabling working from home**; (*our emphasis*)
- exclusion of symptomatic individuals and those who have tested positive for coronavirus; and
- supporting vaccine take up."

"The most effective way of minimising the risk of exposure to any communicable disease in workplaces is to enable some or all staff to work from home, as often as possible, particularly during high prevalence periods"

“Employers who are considering requiring their staff to return to workplace settings should first assess whether alternative arrangements could meet the majority of business needs in order to minimise the risk of exposure to or spread of communicable diseases.”

PCS has raised these points directly with HMRC, however they have taken the decision to proceed regardless of the current Welsh Government guidance, claiming that they are consistent with the advice.

Next Steps

PCS are continuing to make representations to HMRC, as well as to representatives within the Welsh Government.

In the meantime, PCS advise all members in Wales to **ensure that any ‘1-2-1’ conversations taking place around any return to office take place using Return to Workplace discussion toolkit.** [Wales \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

We also strongly advise that any PCS member who has any concerns around returning make this clear in any 1-2-1 and request that the **Supported Return Plan toolkit** is also used. [Manager toolkit - Supported Return Plans - Wales.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

If members have any additional concerns, we ask that you contact your local PCS rep or email PCSCardiffRC@hotmail.com

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If you haven’t already done so, let PCS have your personal/non-work email address and your mobile phone number. We’ll only use it to keep you informed about PCS matters. You can update your details securely online by registering for [PCS Digital](#) or by contacting your local PCS rep, and asking them to enter your details securely on the PCS Organising App.

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