

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: **YES**

Website: **YES**

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

Date: **23rd June 2022**

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RETURNING TO THE OFFICE IN HMRC ADDITIONAL ADVICE FOR MANAGERS & JOBHOLDERS

- ***Continuing Discussions Encouraged to Resolve Issues***
- ***Line Manager Confirmed as the Key Decision Maker***
- ***Advisory Forums to Provide Advice Only***

As members continue to return to HMRC workplaces PCS has been in discussions with HMRC about further measures to support people who have so far not been able to return to the office.

HMRC has now published [further guidance](#) which will initially apply to workers in England & Scotland. The guidance provides a stepped approach which encourages further discussions between Jobholders & managers. PCS is strongly advising members affected by the new guidance to ensure that they take time to read the guidance & where necessary seek advice & support from their local PCS representative.

A Supportive Approach

In our discussions with HMRC PCS negotiators emphasised the need for a clear, understandable process that would follow on from the initial approach agreed earlier this year. We were clear that an early move to invoke disciplinary procedures using the "Upholding our Standards of Conduct" policy would not be acceptable.

The process that has now been published in the view of our negotiators provides a sensible extension to the procedures which will require everyone who has not yet attended a HMRC workplace to have further discussions with their manager using the Return to Office Toolkit.

Line Managers are empowered to agree working arrangements & office attendance patterns that are achievable for the jobholder. This would include the ability to agree a temporary arrangement that may not fully meet the overall business expectation. Only if no agreement could be reached, following those discussions, should the next step in the process be considered.

Advisory Forums

Each business area will over the next few weeks set up Advisory Forums. The forums will operate under [departmental guidance](#) with the task of providing managers an agreed route to seek advice. The forums will be small with representatives from HR & the line of business.

The forum members will meet with the manager informally to talk through the discussions that have taken place so far & consider any advice that could be given to facilitate a return to the workplace.

These discussions will be confidential with the jobholder's details being anonymised. The advice provided by the forum will be noted by the manager who will then meet with the jobholder to talk through the advice.

At no point will the forum seek to direct the manager on any action to take & the forum will not have any role in any decision-making process.

Meeting with Your Manager

PCS is advising that members affected by this new process meet with their manager. PCS branch representatives are available to provide support & assistance as required. It is important that members engage with the process & ensure that any concerns around attendance at an HMRC workplace are identified & recorded using the [Return to the Workplace Toolkit](#).

Exceptions to the Process

The new arrangements will only affect people who are office based but have not been able to attend an HMRC workplace. If you are a designated homeworker or away from work longer term, you will not be covered by these arrangements. The usual procedures for your particular situation will continue to apply.

If you are not attending the workplace fully in line with the business area expectation, the new process will not apply to you.

Next Steps

The new guidance is clear that the discussion process between Jobholders & Line Managers is the predominant part of the approach. It is expected that this will lead to a permanent or temporary working arrangement on office attendance being agreed.

There can be no early or pre-emptive move to invoke the disciplinary process under the Upholding Standards policy & procedures. The steps detailed in the new process & guidance must be followed & only when these have been demonstrably exhausted can any further action be considered.

Any move to proceed with a disciplinary process would first have to be discussed with the Expert Advice Service (EAS). Managers & Jobholders are advised to seek advice if they identify a risk that a move to invoke disciplinary procedures is being contemplated. PCS members can seek advice & support from their local representatives, who in turn can raise any issues or concerns that cannot be resolved with the PCS negotiating team.

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