

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: **18 July 2022**

Ref: **R&C/MB/038/22**

Thermal Comfort

- *In light of the amber and red heat warnings for parts of England, Scotland, and Wales, PCS reaffirms that the agreed guidance on Thermal Comfort should be followed.*
- *HMRC are confident that air conditioning systems will continue to function effectively.*
- *HMRC confirm this is an exceptional circumstance and outside of normal policies for balancing home and office working.*

Agreed Thermal Comfort Guidance should be followed

In light of the amber and red heat warnings for parts of England, Scotland, and Wales, PCS reaffirms that the agreed guidance on Thermal Comfort should be followed at all times. The full policy can be found at: <https://intranet.prod.dop.corp.hmrc.gov.uk/page/about-you/hr-policies-and-guidance/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-guidance/hr62100-thermal-comfort/hr62101-thermal-comfort> [internal link].

Firstly, thermal comfort is what is reasonable for the individual. Factors such as age, disability, and health conditions can mean that an acceptable temperature for one person may be unacceptable (or even dangerous) for another. You may be at higher risk if you have a long-term health condition such as diabetes, or a heart or lung condition, or are on certain medications including diuretics, antihistamines, or beta-blockers.

Managers should allow staff to take breaks from their work area to obtain cool drinks. These breaks should be in addition to any normally rostered breaks, as they are additional actions taken to improve and help regulate thermal comfort.

Managers should consider provision of additional cooling sources such as fans, or air conditioning units for confined areas. All colleagues can request a USB fan for use in the office, following this guidance – no medical evidence/conditions are required.

If at any time a member of staff feels they are unable to work due to the high temperatures, they have a legal right to move to a more suitable place to continue working. With the reduced numbers of staff in the building, people should consider working on the north side of the building.

With working from home now commonplace, the significant heat warnings mean managers should exceptionally override the minimum number of days in the office, particularly in cases where the member of staff has increased risk factors, or lengthy travel. HMRC confirm this as an exceptional circumstance <https://intranet.prod.dop.corp.hmrc.gov.uk/operational-update/extreme-heatwave-forecast> [internal link].

Staff and managers should be aware of the signs of heat exhaustion (below), particularly with temperatures exceeding 30 degrees in some areas for the next few days. Staff experiencing these symptoms should report them to their manager immediately, and through an ACC1, and take immediate action to cool down.

- Headache
- Dizziness and confusion
- Loss of appetite and feeling sick
- Excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin
- Cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
- Fast breathing or pulse
- High temperature of 38C or above
- Being very thirsty

Air Conditioning in HMRC offices considered to be robust

HMRC have provided an assurance to PCS that they consider that the air conditioning systems in their Regional Centres will be able to withstand the predicted high temperatures and continue to function effectively, and there should not be a risk of them failing, but please report any thermal comfort concerns to the local Estates team and facilities management service provider.

Join PCS today

If you've read this briefing and you aren't yet a member of PCS, then [join today](#).

Get involved!

Remember, HMRC applies restrictions on the content of union circulars distributed using the department's email system, so make sure that you stay in touch with your union. You can find your membership number in your latest email digest from PCS.

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.

Adam Smith
Assistant Group Secretary

Hector Wesley
Deputy Group President

Clive Bryant
Assistant Group Secretary

If you require this publication in any other format such as Braille or large print please contact the Group Office at responseteam@pcs.org.uk or call 0151 298 3900