

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: **6th September 2022**

Ref: **R&C/MB/043/22**

OFFICE ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

PCS RAISES CONCERNS WITH HMRC ON DATA USE

- HMRC to Use Log-in Information to Monitor Office Attendance
- Concerns Raised that Trust with the Workforce will be Undermined
- PCS Engaging with the Employer on an Alternative Approach

HMRC has announced that it will now use individual employee log-in information to monitor office attendance. This would be the first time that records will have been used to scrutinize individual office attendance. PCS has made it clear to the employer's representatives that this approach has not been agreed. We are continuing to engage with HMRC with a view to agreeing an acceptable alternative approach. PCS is also seeking legal advice on the matter so that we can issue detailed advice to members should the employer continue with this policy.

Returning to the Office

Earlier this year HMRC stated its expectation for its workforce to return to the office in line with expectations set by its Business Groups. For most people this would mean attending the office on average 2 or 3 days a week with agreed variations to take account of individual working patterns & arrangements.

PCS & HMRC agreed arrangements where managers & jobholders can discuss return to office plans using a Toolkit process which would enable workers to identify any issues or problems with meeting the office working expectation. The approach included the ability for managers to agree temporary solutions with adjustments to working arrangements. Additionally, further support from a variety of sources including the Expert Advice Service (EAS) & Occupational Health can be sought.

This approach has been generally welcomed & proved successful as the majority of HMRCs workforce are either working from the office in line with the Business Group expectation or have agreed alternative arrangements.

Latterly, further assistance for managers has been provided by HR-led Return to Office Forums, which have been used to ensure that the approach around discussions on returning to the office have been followed. The Forums have also provided a route to seek further assistance on the discussions if required.

PCS continues to encourage members to engage with the agreed process which will assist in ensuring that workable solutions are found. If you require support please contact your local PCS representative.

HMRC Concerns

Throughout this period the employer has been checking how many people at each of its locations have attended the office. Although this has been done using log-in records there has been no individual monitoring with only general information about the number of people attending an office being supplied to Business Group managers.

The employer's representatives have raised concerns that a relatively small proportion of people have not engaged with the Toolkit process. **HMRC will now use the individual log-in records available via the IT systems.** Although at this point only the names of those individuals identified will be passed to the Business Group, PCS is concerned that the use of the IT records for this purpose is not appropriate & would constitute the crossing of a line which could lead to the records being used more widely in the future.

Assurances & Further Action

HMRC have sought to assure PCS that the activity on scrutinizing individual records is **strictly limited to those people who do not log-in at an HMRC Office from the 5th September**. Individuals who have agreed working arrangements such as contractual homeworkers will not be included. There are some offices including Telford & Liverpool where office attendance has been restricted so these locations will also be excluded from this activity. Details of the new arrangements can be found on the [Monitoring Office Attendance in HMRC Helpcard](#) & the associated [New working arrangements Q&A](#)

Although the data collection activity will now commence no immediate action will be taken at this point as managers in Business Groups will not be contacted until early October. There is also no scope for Business Group or Directorates to operate alternative arrangements that diverge from HMRC Policy.

PCS will be continuing to engage with HMRC to seek an alternative approach & further assurance on the use of IT data. As indicated, we will also be seeking legal advice so that further advice can be issued.

Further information & guidance will be issued when it becomes available but, in the meantime, members are encouraged to continue engaging with the return to office discussion process using the agreed Toolkits & Guidance.

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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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