

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: **3 November 2022**

Ref: **R&C/MB/046/22**

Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme HMRC withdraws from membership

- ***HMRC announce that they will not be renewing their membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme***
- ***HMRC have also advised PCS that it will no longer enter the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index***
- ***HMRC cite Value for Money concerns and the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy as the primary reasons for this decision***
 - ***PCS told HMRC in advance of its decision that we support Stonewall***
- ***PCS will continue to challenge HMRC regarding their commitment to LGBT+ Inclusion***

On Monday 25th September HMRC confirmed in a message on the PRISM Yammer Community that they have decided not to renew its annual membership to the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme. Although not explicitly referenced in the message, PCS have also received confirmation that HMRC will no longer enter the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

PCS has for a number of years been affiliated to Stonewall and at the TUC LGBT+ Conference in July it put forward a motion in support of it which was passed with near unanimous support from across the trade union movement. The motion was drafted in the context of pressure being applied to numerous organisations in the public and private sector to withdraw from any form of collaboration with Stonewall. PCS sent HMRC a copy of the motion when we were invited to provide comments to inform a paper being compiled for ExCom regarding Stonewall.

It is apparent that for many years HMRC valued the work Stonewall undertakes. It is not precisely clear to PCS when HMRC's view of Stonewall changed. In 2015 Jim Harra wrote the following in a Civil Service blog while he was HMRC LGBT+ Champion:

"In January [2015], HMRC was named as one of the best and most inclusive places to work for LGB&T people – we were ranked 27th in the Stonewall Top 100 Employers in Britain list for 2015. Much of that success is down to our constant drive to keep LGB&T diversity issues high on our equality agenda – and, of course, to the hard work of all our people in the HMRC LGB&T networks."

I was delighted that we did so well in the index, but what makes me really proud are the great things we've managed to get off the ground at HMRC since our last Stonewall submission."

HMRC cite Value for Concerns and the Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Strategy as primary reason for non-renewal

PCS believe that it is unfortunate that HMRC now feel that entering the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index is a costly exercise which doesn't provide good value for money. HMRC officials have met with Stonewall several times in recent months and HMRC have given PCS the following account of those meetings:

"the conversations were constructive in the sense that Stonewall listened and agreed to take positive steps. Unfortunately though, these were not followed up on by Stonewall, which ultimately played a part in the decision taken not to renew... following the more recent interactions with Stonewall we did not feel that they could provide a tailored offer that will progress HMRC's LGBT+ inclusion agenda in the way we'd like."

The Cabinet Office oversees the Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Strategy which HMRC consider to be an adequate alternative to working with Stonewall. PCS have concerns over the Cabinet Office's role when it comes to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, given that they recently paid a six-figure sum to settle a race discrimination employment tribunal claim. HMRC contend that the CS D&I Strategy is a framework which they will work from, but they will retain an LGBT+ focus based on data and evidence.

PCS to continue challenge HMRC on LGBT+ Inclusion

HMRC have told PCS that their decision has not been influenced by representations they have received from various organisations questioning their involvement with Stonewall. That may be case, but it is likely these organisations will claim credit for this decision.

PCS continues to have regular meetings with HMRC to discuss Equality, Diversity & Inclusion matters. We are due to meet with the HMRC LGBT+ Champion this month. We are determined to ensure that the department honours its commitments to LGBT+ Inclusion.

PCS welcomes Rainbow Laces Campaign

English Premier League football clubs as well as other sporting organisations have been supporting the Rainbow Laces Campaign which ran from the 19th to 31st October. This campaign is a Stonewall initiative aimed at promoting LBGTQ+ Inclusion in sport.

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