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# Hybrid working - the benefits and challenges

Zac Vallely, HMPO London branch and Home Office GEC member, writes about the benefits and challenges of hybrid working for workers and unions.

One issue that will be front and centre for the next generation of trade unionists is the fight for hybrid working.

As the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic shattered the paradigm of office-based workplaces, the civil service had to find novel ways to ensure that fundamental government services could continue in a world without offices.

While this shift was forged out of necessity, in the post-Covid world we have recognised that hybrid work allows an improved work-life balance, as workers are less subject to time, financial, and stress costs of commuting. The civil service has also recognised potential savings to be realised from slimming down office space across the government estate.

Despite lowering costs and yielding a happier and more productive government workforce, hybrid working within the civil service has come under repeated attack from tabloids and politicians. This is despite a lack of any evidence that home working negatively impacts productivity and the acceptance of hybrid across increasing amounts of the private sector.

PCS has been a leading voice in disagreements around home working, applying pressure to employers when they seek to force staff to do more work in-office, often without heed to operational need or practicality but due to political pressure. Recent campaigns in the DWP and other departments have seen PCS members push back against back-to-work drives through novel tactics such as organising days of mass office attendance – showing how far more staff work in our departments than can be accommodated by our offices without hybrid working.

Even as the benefits to workers are obvious, hybrid working may present trade unionists with challenges, as remote work can risk isolating workers from each

other. The next generation of trade unionists must find ways to organise their colleagues as the nature of labour continues to change in the 21st century.