

14 March 2024

Workers at Office of National Statistics begin strike ballot

PCS members angry at changes to return-to-work policy

More than a thousand Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union members working for the Office of National Statistics are being balloted for strike action after being ordered back to their office two days a week.

Workers in Newport, Titchfield, London, Darlington, Manchester and Edinburgh are angry at being told to come into the office for at least 40% of the working week after previously being allowed to work from home since the start of lockdown.

Many come into the office several days a week anyway, with others accepting jobs at ONS because they were promised the flexibility to work from home.

PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote said: "Post-pandemic arrangements at ONS have been an example of best practice in flexible and sustainable ways of working, so it's a mystery why managers have changed their minds, especially after having regularly reassured members they could remain working more flexibly.

"No evidence-based business case has been made for their rushed decision - a move that has caused anger among staff demoralised by the lack of trust and the need for rapid changes to their childcare and other arrangements."

PCS is calling for meaningful talks with ONS management before the strike ballot closes on April 2.

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