

18 March 2024

HMRC's 'Attendance Tool' questions answered

HMRC has confirmed the 'go-live' date for 60% office attendance for all grades will be 2 April 2024, with their 'Office Attendance Tool' rolled-out the same day.

HMRC has now confirmed its 'go-live' date for the increased restricting of the home-based element of hybrid-working, by announcing that 2 April 2024 is the date that the arbitrary restriction of two days per week working from home comes into force across the main department. PCS remains opposed to the Cabinet Office's edict, on the grounds the plans are both unnecessary and heavy-handed; nevertheless, we're continuing to meet with HMRC, to discuss the department's plans and to try to resolve a host of outstanding matters.

We know there are questions and concerns that still remain unanswered by HMRC. These include issues such as office capacity, members facing the additional burden of increased travel costs, concerns about the level of training for staff and managers on how the tool will work, and the functionality of the Attendance Tool itself. We're aware that major access issues were reported in February when the tool was rolled-out to an additional few thousand members of staff at the SO grade.

[We've advised HMRC to consider pushing-back the planned implementation date,](#) to allow time for these outstanding concerns to be resolved (especially since other departments have set their 'go-live' target date for May or even later). Disappointingly, despite our numerous concerns, HMRC are steadfastly sticking to the 2 April go-live date.

Getting you the answers you need

Over the last few weeks, members have regularly contacted PCS with questions that they do not feel have been sufficiently or clearly answered by HMRC, including simple information on how the tool actually works.

Below is a set of common questions we've been asked and answers we've obtained. We've provided a copy of these answers to the project team, and they have confirmed that the information is accurate; so if you're told anything different by local management, get in touch with your local PCS representative straight away, and if they can't resolve it locally, they'll pass it to the union's central negotiating team to take forward with senior management.

- **How does the tool work?**

The tool automatically gathers data from various sources that tell the system where you are working. If you dock your computer into the system at a desk in an office, then this creates a report that registers on the tool as a day of office attendance. If you connect via Government Wi-Fi then no report is created; however, if you're in an office with a swipe card system, swiping into the office will also register you as attending the office.

Managers do not have access to any timings for swiping in or docking your computer, it simply registers on the system as an office day.

The system also pulls data from the online HR system, this means that once any absence or leave/flexi request has been approved by your manager on the system your number of 'available working days' will be adjusted which then adjusts the 60% calculation.

There is facility within the tool for your manager to make manual adjustments for things like Special Working Arrangements or for days when you are not working at home but are also not in an office, if you are out on a visit, at a conference etc.

A report is produced on a monthly basis that both you and your manager can view for the previous month and any necessary manual adjustments can be made in the 1st week of the following month if something is incorrect before the monthly report is finalised on 8th of each month.

Attendance in the office is calculated using each individual's number of available working days, not the number of days in the month.

- **Do I have to 'make up' office attendance for days off work (leave/flexi/sick).**

No - the office attendance tool discounts any days where you are not available for work before it calculates its figure for 60%.

If any member is told by a manager that they need to 'make up days' due to leave, sick etc, please contact your local branch.

- **My manager has stated they will be retrospectively 'auditing' the tool for months prior to April.**

If you are grade AA to HO then the expectation of being in 60% of the time does not apply until April 2nd. There may be info that your manager can see that dates prior to 2nd April however PCS have received confirmation that this data for staff at AA - HO grade should not be used as it is unlikely to be accurate.

- **I regularly work in a location that is neither my home or an office such as visiting customers premises or attending events outside of the office, are these days classed as home or office working?**

If you are on official business that takes you to a location outside the office such as a trader visit, conference or training event, these days will be counted as office attendance however you will need to make a manual adjustment to the tool and select a reason code from the drop-down options.

- **What about bank holidays?**

The system automatically deducts bank holidays from the number of available working days. We have queried if this is the case for staff in Northern Ireland and Scotland who have additional bank holidays and are awaiting confirmation however, we have been given assurances that manual adjustments can be made if necessary.

- **I've been told my attendance will be monitored weekly.**

The system generates reports based on a calendar month. This is done retrospectively and will be available around a week into the following month. The expectation is an average over a calendar month, not weekly. If you are being monitored weekly, please contact your local branch.

- **My manager/business area is asking me to fill out additional tools/spreadsheets etc to monitor my attendance.**

There should be no local tools, spreadsheets etc being used. If you are being asked to complete any additional office attendance monitoring tool, please report this to your local branch.

- **I have a Special Working Arrangement or Reasonable Adjustment**

There should be no change to your SWA or RA etc as a result of the new policy. There is a facility within the tool for your manager to input your individual attendance expectation based on any SWA, RA or agreed temporary arrangement.

- **I am a Contractual Home Worker**

There is no change for you, if you have a CHW contract the 60% office attendance expectation does not apply.

- **As part of a redundancy avoidance arrangement, I have an agreement that I will attend the office less than 60% of the time.**

There will be no change to any arrangements that were agreed as part of any office closure/redundancy avoidance exercise. We are aware that inconsistent advice has been given out from EAS however we have been given written assurances that agreements reached that resulted in the issue of a BM1 notice (which is a record of the 121 decision) are formal agreements. Unfortunately, this info is not stored in a way that means it will automatically populate the tool meaning that managers of staff with such arrangements will need to make a manual adjustment in the tool for individuals office attendance expectation. HR are liaising with EAS to ensure that any further advice around BM1 redundancy avoidance arrangements is consistent.

If any member of PCS experiences difficulties around this, please get in touch with your local branch straight away.

- **I've been told my building swipe card data, log in times etc will be monitored against my flexi sheets.**

Although swipe card info is part of the suite of information that feeds into the tool, the actual swipe card data is not available to your manager, so it is not possible for them to cross check this data against your flexi sheet. We do recommend that all members ensure that they are familiar with the HMRC policy KB0017402 Working your hours flexibly in HMRC: Flexible Working Hours (flexi) approach.

- **Will I face disciplinary action if I am not meeting the 60% office attendance expectation.**

We are aware of anecdotal reports of members being informed that if they fail to meet the 60% expectation with immediate effect they will be dismissed.

HMRC will expect colleagues to attend the office for 60% of their working time. Managers will be expected to follow the process as set out in the Managers help card, before they consider contacting Expert Advice Service on next steps for taking action, this could result in disciplinary action where it is deemed that there is non-compliance with the policy.

The tool and the managers help card are intended to support staff and managers to have conversations and put in any necessary extra support to help staff meet the office attendance expectation or to make reasonable adjustments to expectations which could potentially include a reduction in the number of days attendance expected as per the Embedding Hybrid Working Toolkit. This could take the form of SWA's, Temporary arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments etc.

If any PCS member feels that the tool or managers help card are not being used in a supportive way, we advise you to speak to a local branch rep as soon as possible.

What else you can do

As we've said, PCS have already made the point to the department, that there are bound to be many HMRC members of staff who are able to balance work and home responsibilities, without resorting to a Special Working Arrangement (SWA), just by being able to work from home for that third day each week.

If you currently have the ability to work from home for three days, and you have those specific responsibilities (it could be childcare, caring for an elderly relative, or it could just be something as simple as you're low-paid and struggling with the inflated cost of living and commuting); you should take the following steps:

1. In the first instance you should raise the issue with your line manager and explore the possibility of retaining the current arrangements. You're advised to set out your request in writing, explaining the reasons why you need to retain the current arrangements.
2. If your manager says that they cannot meet that request, then you should make a formal written request for an SWA, seeking the working pattern that will allow you to balance your work/home responsibilities. Again, set out the reasoning in detail.
3. If the formal written request for an SWA is rejected, you should submit a grievance using the department's 'Raising a Concern' process. Make sure that you are clear in your submission that you have already tried to resolve the matter informally through contact with your line manager, and formally

through the SWA process.

Your local PCS representative can advise and support you through the 'Raising a Concern' mechanism, so if you need help, don't hesitate to get in touch with your union.

Join PCS

As your trade union, PCS continues to negotiate with HMRC to stand-up for your interests. If you've read this briefing and you aren't yet a member of PCS, then you should [join today](#).