

26 April 2024

Office for National Statistics workers announce industrial action

PCS members will not comply with a new instruction to spend at least 40% of their time in the office

More than a thousand Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union members at the Office for National Statistics are refusing to be forced back to the office two days a week.

Almost 1,200 ONS employees based in Newport in South Wales, Titchfield in Hampshire, London, Darlington, Manchester and Edinburgh will take indefinite industrial action from May 8, meaning they will not comply with a new instruction to spend at least 40% of their time in the office.

Many of them already willingly spend more than 40% of their working time in the office, but there is widespread upset about the arbitrary nature of the new directive.

Following a promise by management that staff could continue to work flexibly after the Covid pandemic, some workers started families, moved house and made other long-term commitments, safe in the knowledge, they thought, their working conditions were secure.

PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote said: "Our members are a highly skilled and capable workforce and they deserve to be treated as such, showing for several years they can successfully manage hybrid working.

"The new policy threatens serious disruption, especially for staff with childcare and other caring responsibilities, and those who live a considerable distance from their designated office.

"The workforce at ONS is spread across the UK, meaning that regardless of where staff perform their work, most meetings and collaboration must have a virtual presence.

“Mandated office attendance removes the flexibility and trust that was promised to staff by senior leaders, which staff understandably shaped their lives around, for the sake of meeting an unnecessary attendance percentage.”

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