

7 August 2024

Supporting members concerned about violent disorder

PCS continues to support members with their concerns, and managers are asked to consider sensible measures. HMRC assures PCS it is 'monitoring and responding to intelligence'.

The PCS HMRC group executive committee shares the concern of members over the disgraceful and despicable acts of violence which have taken place in a number of towns and cities in many parts of the UK recently. We are also listening to and appreciate the understandable concerns and alarm this activity has caused among members, particularly for those in our communities who are being targeted because of their race or religious beliefs.

The PCS website contains [a statement from the PCS national black members' committee](#) and the R&C group president is a signatory. We also recognise and appreciate that many of our local PCS reps are working incredibly hard to support their members and this can take its toll.

Escalating concerns

PCS has been working with HMRC's national counter terrorism leads, and the HR health and safety team, to escalate concerns about any potential risks for those travelling to and from the workplace, while attending our offices and sites, and when on operational duty and conducting visits.

With a considerable amount of disinformation circulating on social media, HMRC advise they are being intelligence-driven rather than rumour-driven and are continually monitoring the ongoing and emerging situation to provide a proportionate response. Bradford's Centenary Court office closed on Monday afternoon because of the location of where a proposed protest was going to occur. This protest did not materialise and there have been a large number of similar protests which have been rumoured but have not occurred.

While some other government departments have decided to close their offices, there has been no information to date to suggest HMRC sites may be targeted, and security teams have been briefed on how to deal with any sudden or unexpected activity affecting any of our workplaces.

'A Magnet for Protest'

That said, we recognise and have been consistent in expressing concern about the UK government branding on HMRC regional centres. It does create a magnet for protests and in addition it leads to some members of the public assuming that all aspects of government works are dealt with in these buildings. For example PCS is aware that some staff have been approached outside HMRC buildings and asked if the office deals with immigration matters. In the current climate such assumptions are potentially problematic.

Jim Harra's message from earlier this week has confirmed that where anyone has specific concerns about their safety they should "discuss these with your manager and agree what is most sensible based on your individual circumstances" including consideration of working from home as required. Where any request is made but refused for temporary changes to your working pattern or office attendance based on your personal and local circumstances, including travel to and from your workplace, please let a local PCS representative know for escalation to the group executive committee to challenge as required.

We do hope that managers will be pro-active in discussing these issues with their teams rather than waiting to be approached or assuming that silence indicates staff are content.

Contact with the public

Anyone on operational activity outside their usual place of work, or conducting visits, must also review the potential of protests disrupting their activity and consider in advance any potential risks to their safety. Visits should not take place if risks are identified that can't be mitigated.

PCS have met the HMRC Abusive Callers Project Team this week and we are alert to the possibility of an increasing volume of abusive calls on telephony lines. Since the facility of placing a marker on an abusive customer's record was introduced in June it has been noticed that a far larger number of markers have been placed on records than HRACC1s or HRVIO1s completed. This is concerning given that if a marker is placed on a customer's record the reason for that should

be reported.

PCS will continue to escalate the concerns of members and to work with HMRC senior management to consistently review any potential emerging threats and to proactively act in the best interests of safety.