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# Office Working Arrangements

Since the introduction of the Office Attendance Tool within HMRC there has been an increased focus on workers' working locations moving towards a proportion of 60% of staff working from an office.

Despite a plethora of written guidance and news items in the organisation and manager-upskilling sessions, some confusion still exists resulting in continued queries from members on this matter.

Pay and Contracts Reform (PaCR) set out an opportunity for all workers to work a minimum two days from home each working week, or more if agreed.

The Office Attendance Tool automatically calculates an expectation of 60% of time within the office on a monthly basis but it is not 100% accurate e.g. where a new month starts or ends mid-week, workers may already have worked the required number of days in the office in this week (in the previous month).

Where members work less than 5 days in a week (e.g. due to contract or taking leave) the number of office days is reduced.

Another anomaly is how the tool reports bank holidays affecting the requirement for office days. PaCR sets out a minimum entitlement to work 2 days from home each week. This means where there's a 4-day working week because of a bank holiday there is not a requirement to work three days in the office in this week.

In some months the tool may therefore show more days as a target than is necessary, however the tool was not intended to be prescriptive and absolute, it was intended to provide a background for discussions between managers and workers towards hybrid working commitments.

The department's tool to monitor time spent in the office is recorded in days, not hours and a 'day' is represented by any proportion of time spent working from the office. There is no general requirement to work contracted hours from the office on an office day.

Managers cannot dictate or demand a specific amount of time spent within the office to qualify as an “office day” unless the task has some specific requirements that require work to be performed from the office specifically (and these would normally be covered by a departmental working arrangement).

Any other tools or processes intended to monitor individuals’ specific time spent in the office are prohibited and where these have been found PCS has successfully requested their immediate removal. Calendars to plan location of work ahead are permissible, as long as they do not track an individual’s time (e.g. by minutes/hours).

Members can split their time between home and office on a given day and still be recorded as working from the office. Whilst there have been anecdotal concerns raised of workers dropping in to the office briefly to get their tick in the box and going home shortly after, PCS believes this is mostly an exaggeration.

No minimum number of hours for spending time in the office exists although the union encourages members to be open and transparent of their whereabouts and plans. The employer also has a responsibility to workers’ safety and of course would need to assure this in the event of an emergency or evacuation of a building.

Managers are meant to use discretion when enforcing office working and so for instance, where circumstances might prevent a worker from attending the office for a short period (e.g, due to illness which might not prevent them from working) managers can agree to waive this period and not expect time to be made up later.

The tools are intended to report a log-in of workers attending an office and in most circumstances this will automatically capture workers connected to an official WIFI network within that office, but it isn’t faultless, so should be checked for accuracy against the member’s own records on a monthly basis.

Splitting time working from home and office can be beneficial to both workers and the employer. For example, parents can leave the office to collect children from school and continue their work from home later at a time where the employer needs resources to be available to customers.

If members face any challenges with hybrid working they should speak with their local branch reps who can make further enquiries for the business area the member works within.

**Andy O'Donnell**, chair of personal cases working group