

3 March 2022

Members contemplate strike action over unfair return to offices

PCS members have voted in an indicative survey their willingness to take action over the 60% return to the office imposed by management. A statutory ballot will now take place.

PCS members voted overwhelmingly in a recent indicative ballot to take strike action and action short of strike over the 60% return to the offices, which Ofsted management imposed with only a week's notice and without consulting with the recognised trade union side.

Thank you to all members who completed the joint trade union side survey about the compulsory return to the office for APT staff. PCS have heard and understood the strength of feeling of our members at Ofsted. Ofsted is an outlier in the percentage of time they are requiring staff to attend the office; this is unparalleled in other areas of the civil service. Ofsted have still not given us a good justification for why the percentage requirement is so high.

The results of the survey were decisive in showing the dissatisfaction and distress caused by the required return to offices and showed members' willingness to consider possible further action.

69.4% prepared to take strike action.

90% prepared to take action short of strike.

PCS went back to the negotiating table following the survey, presented the findings and suggested a reasonable alternative to 60%. Even with this overwhelming strength of feeling from members across all 3 recognised unions, Ofsted ET refused to review their position.

On 23 February, PCS submitted a trade dispute letter which stated that unless Ofsted met either of the following terms, PCS would move to ballot our members.

1. Confirm that the requirement for our members to attend the workplace for 60% of their time will be dropped; or
2. Confirm that the requirement will be paused to allow for negotiations with us via which we can reach an agreement on future working arrangements.

As neither of these conditions have been met, Ofsted have given us little option but to follow up your mandate in the survey with a statutory ballot. Your PCS reps will now meet to finalise next steps with regard moving towards an industrial action ballot.

The ballot result will be critical. Not only in showing the strength of feeling on the 60% return to offices but also on how consultation with the trade unions has been ignored and staff concerns disregarded.

Ofsted are not playing fair and have even taken the punitive measure of cancelling the planned Pay Workshop with the entire trade union side this week. This speaks volumes, showing Ofsted's unwillingness to accept they need to consult with the trade unions, listen to staff and review this harmful policy. Instead they have chosen to retaliate in this way because PCS dared to challenge them on their return to the offices policy.

What you can do:

- **Update your personal details on [PCS Digital](#)** to ensure we have personal contact details as we cannot use any Ofsted resources for any communications regarding and possible industrial action issues.
- Ask your colleagues to [join PCS](#).
- Get active in the union, please step forward and become a PCS rep or advocate.