



## **Broad Left Network Programme for PCS in R&C**

In order to win our demands (see below) and more it is key that we build a vibrant campaigning union. We must articulate the demands and our pressure on the employer. But the way to do that is to campaign and build the union. It is our members collective action that wins concessions.

### **Home Working**

It is clear that HMRC has moved onto the front-foot regarding members returning to offices, given the increased comms and team meetings that have been issued and organised to discuss this. The recent Pay & Contract Reform Agreement (PACR) confirmed that HMRC can work from home for at least two days per week – and whilst this will form part of our contracts moving forward, there's no reason for us to settle for this. Indeed, at a point when so many Civil Servants are working from home full-time, the national union's call for two-day per week home working to be rolled out across the entire Civil Service is a massive step backwards.

It should be noted that the home-working aspect of PACR was not a gain won by PCS, but rather a mechanism required by HMRC to deal with the fact that in some (if not all) Regional Centres, there are simply too many staff for the building capacity – and this is why we shouldn't settle for it. Members in HMRC have demonstrated for over a year that they can work effectively from home for five days a week and beyond this, most members find it easier to work from home, save money & have far more control over their work-life balance.

The BLN calls for all HMRC members to be able to work flexibly and decide where it is best for them to work. This includes moving staff between roles where a person wishes to work from home but their current role doesn't make that possible.

### **Pay**

Whilst the PACR delivered pay rises for a number of members, many members towards the top end of their pay scale did not receive anything substantial, but still lost a plethora of valued terms & conditions – these members have been abandoned. Whilst the NEC has been keen to point out the difficulties in beating the Tories' undemocratic strike ballot threshold, the NEC also vehemently argued for a pay policy which meant that prior to Covid, when a majority of PCS members in HMRC voted in favour of strike action over pay, this action was not authorised by the union. As a result, PCS in HMRC went straight into pay talks with one hand tied behind its back, losing our most important piece of leverage.

BLN activists have argued against the NEC's pay policy since its inception two years ago. We put forward a national campaign not just about pay, but also taking up many of the issues that affect members, this potentially could have engaged members and delivered a ballot over the undemocratic threshold. In two years, the NEC has delivered nothing over pay, save for one Westminster debate. The BLN believes that a national campaign is necessary to deal with pay

across the Civil Service, but is not so short-sighted as to block groups which can take industrial action from doing so.

The BLN demands that we have fully-funded pay rises which are not linked to detrimental changes in terms & conditions. The NEC pay campaign has been an abject failure and it's clearly time for a completely new campaign which trusts in the strength of members to deliver the action required to achieve a fair pay rise for every single member.

### **Terms & Conditions**

Whilst the issues surrounding changes to T&Cs were quiet as we approached the implementation date of 1<sup>st</sup> June, the damage done by PACR is now becoming apparent. The department has basically used the GEC to destroy a myriad of protections that members have fought to retain for decades. This includes the loss of the MIS Agreement, attacks on Alternative Working Patterns, changes to allowances, loss of control over shift patterns, the introduction of mandatory unpaid overtime & loss paid breaks.

The GEC was not honest with members about the extent of the damage that PACR would do and worse still, the GEC did not even seem to be aware of a variety of these problems until after it voted to recommend the deal to members. Unfortunately, the deal is now through and we need to deal with the consequences.

We can however have our cake and eat it – there is nothing to stop our group fighting to win back each and every term and condition lost as a result of PACR – and indeed, given that it was a failure on the part of the union to prevent this situation from arising, we have an obligation to do this for every member. This includes seeking contractual improvements for members that were essentially left out of any contract reform such as the Surge Rapid Response Teams.

More importantly, the group has two years until this pay deal ends – we absolutely cannot be put in the same situation again. We have two years to get this group organised and ensure that in two years, HMRC does not come back to the table to either attack more T&Cs, or to reintroduce another pay cap.

### **Outsourcing & Contingent Labour**

Austerity has meant that HMRC resource is cut to the bone. Minimum staffing levels are maintained across the department. This has made us ill-equipped to handle changing priorities, such as Brexit. HMRC has attempted to crisis manage this situation through a reliance on outsourcing and temporary staff. Yet time and again these decisions have created knock on problems as the department underestimates the complexity of the work undertaken by our members and the private sector finds itself unable to perform the roles correctly while maintaining a profit. When the private sector needs to make a choice between a good service to the public and profits, profits will always be their choice.

Outsourcing also cuts across our ability to defend our members. This has been particularly stark in CDIO where many staff have been employed by RCDTS Limited – a private company wholly owned by HMRC. RCDTS chose to follow civil service processes when it's convenient to do so, but argues that its staff aren't civil servants when PCS presses for recognition rights and consultation.

HMRC is increasing outsourcing as part of the move to Regional Centres. In house security guards are being privatised; private companies will be responsible for administering room bookings. This is able to happen because there's never been a group wide campaign to raise

awareness of the true impact of BOF and to put forward the alternative of in housing in a serious way.

Members of BLN will continue to argue that the GEC must launch a campaign group wide to resist the further imposition of outsourced & temporary contacts:

- Making the case for permanent staff and outsourced staff to be brought into HMRC.
- Fight for an agreement with HMRC on fair workloads and training, accounting for time needed to receive and embed training.
- Identify HMRC responsibilities by work stream and the staffing levels (using fair workloads) necessary to accomplish those responsibilities.
- Press HMRC to put a business case to HMT for funding to achieve a fully staffed HMRC.
- Support that business case with group materials to agitate public opinion about of tax lost due to tax avoidance that isn't tackled because of under staffing.
- Make the case to show that in housing provides the best outcome for HMRC staff and the public generally.

### **Diversity and equality**

HMRC token gestures to fight discrimination in our workplaces is not enough. All policies must be subject to review to root out unequal practices that go against common principles of fairness. All policies must be applied consistently in HMRC Groups. It simply isn't good enough for a Group to act as if it is the employer and to subject the staff in that Group to different policies and practices. All members are entitled to be treated fairly by HMRC as the employer.

Equality and accessibility must be a fully integrated part of all PCS organising, bargaining and campaigning. Austerity has hurt all workers, but it has hit women, BAME, LGBTQ+ and disabled workers even more. The Tax Justice campaign must be re-launched to help fight all cuts to public services and an alternative fought for fully funded public and local services including HMRC. With well-paid, highly trained staff is crucial to the union's equality agenda.

The BLN call for a campaign to demand time in work to attend union meetings and participate in the union. Many Members are unable to attend meetings outside of working hours due to other commitments. This is doubly true for members with caring responsibilities. This discrimination has gone overlooked for too long and must be challenged.

### **Winning on these demands**

In order to win these demands and more it is key that we build a vibrant campaigning union. We must articulate the demands and put pressure on the employer.

Too often demands are put forward by the GEC with no connection or communication with branches. It isn't surprising that HMRC feels no pressure to deliver when even affected members aren't aware of what's been called for on their behalf.

The way to apply pressure to the employer to win is to campaign and build the union. It is our members collective action that wins concessions.

If you believe in our programme, please join the BLN and help deliver the wins that our members deserve.



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