

5 April 2024

ONS members vote for industrial action over mandatory return to the office policy

PCS members in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have decisively voted 73% to strike over management's insistence on 40% physical workplace attendance from April 2024.

Home and hybrid-working has been successful since the start of the Covid pandemic, even helping ONS to win significant recognition (shortlisted for the CIPD's Best Flexible Working Initiative category and securing a place in Glassdoor's Top 50 Best Places to Work in 2023).

Managers have regularly reassured staff that these arrangements would remain in place and staff have built their lives around it. The new policy has already caused considerable disruption, especially for staff with childcare and other caring arrangements.

PCS believes in the value to ONS and its staff of flexible and sustainable ways of working. Management has presented no evidence-based business case for the new policy and has refused the union's request to consider a more gradual and flexible transition. PCS has now written to the employer to seek urgent talks to resolve the dispute.

Fran Heathcote, General Secretary of PCS, says:

"ONS bosses have seriously undermined the trust and goodwill of their staff by seeking to drive this policy through in such a heavy-handed way, heedless of the consequences.

"They now need to immediately pause implementation of the policy and talk to us about reaching a sensible resolution of this issue, which does not carelessly disadvantage staff."

ends