

The Information ARC

24 May 2017



Welcome to the May issue of **The Information ARC**, it's a short one this month as only two people have provided information. Normal service will be resumed in June when we hope this and a bumper edition of ARC News will make up for it.

Feedback and suggestions are always welcome, get in touch with me at paula@fda.org.uk or find me on the GAL and give me a call for a chat!

The President's offerings

Office closures 2017-18 - Phase 2

The commencement of the second phase of office closures for 2017-18 had already been delayed because Cabinet Office had not signed off the process. Unfortunately the General Election, called for 8 June 2017, has further delayed this process as we entered Purdah at midnight on 21 April.

I have been discussing the impact on this with the department but have yet to get a satisfactory answer on what the impact will be (if anything) on the office closure dates. Logically I don't think they can move but I need confirmation from HMRC that this is the case.

While we waited for the second phase I have asked the department to clarify what the position is for those who are currently under 55 (the new age to access your pension in the compensation scheme) but partially retired.

But while we sit out this unfortunate delay I would be grateful if members affected by it would contact me if they want anything else finding out or clarifying or any other support.

Trainee Pay

During my address at Conference I was able to share news about Trainee pay. No figures were given because the negotiations are ongoing but I was able to say:

- The 2015 trainees will receive an uplift from 1 June 2017.
- The 2016 trainees will receive an uplift during the 2017 remit year (1 June 2017 to 31 May 2018), probably from 1 January 2018.
- By the end of the remit year the Band T minimum will only be £1,000 less than the HO minimum, both nationally and in London.
- The intention is that by the end of the following year (1 June 2018 to 31 May 2019) the minimums will be the same.
- There will be no overtaking as this is achieved.

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The actual figures will be shared when the pay award is made public. They have been carefully thought out to reflect the payment of the uplift earlier in the remit year than for previous trainees.

At all times we have had to remember that what we negotiate on trainee pay comes out of the 1% and so any amount allocated to the Band T pay bill over the 1% initial cost is funded by colleagues.

Pay Award 2017

I have already sent an update on this so you are aware that the award will be delayed. I am working with the pay team to try and prevent the situation we had in 2015 where delaying the award moved some of us into the higher pension contribution band. I am hopeful it will not happen this year because we are aware and have taken action.

If you were one of those affected in 2015 can you please contact me at vicky@fda.org.uk as there is a chance, now the 2015-16 year has concluded, that we can tackle the unfairness of that rate increase.

For all of us I'm sorry, but the award will be as disappointing as usual and this is the main driver for the work we have managed to commit the department to do on the long term pay and reward strategy. Rest assured I do not lose any opportunity to try and improve our pay and I firmly believe the 1% pay cap is no longer sustainable.

Equal Pay

Helen, Zohra and I have been to conference with Counsel on the equal pay claim which we will now take to the Employment Appeal Tribunal. I have signed up for a bit of mathematical work to contribute to the appeal document and once Purdah is over we will ramp up the work we are doing to raise awareness of our claim. Can you contact us if you have been promoted from G7 to G6 in the last couple of years please and were not on the max of G7 when you were promoted? Also, if you are reading this having retired or left the department or know anyone in that applies to, please get in touch.

AGM & Dinner

On 16 & 17 May we held our 2017 AGM and dinner in Manchester with 86 motions on the agenda. Three of these fell because there was nobody to propose them but the other 83 were proposed and debated. There is a very brief write up on our website www.arcunion.org.uk and a full write up will appear in the next ARC News edition which is currently being put together. The dinner was held at the Midland Hotel with Jon Thompson giving the after dinner speech. Feedback suggests both the AGM and the dinner were successful.

Vicky Johnson

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External Relations and other stuff

Things have been quiet on our external relations. Part of this is down to the amount of energy and time being expended by parts of civil society on the Labour Party leadership changes, Brexit and now the General Election. But I also think part is down to a slight loss of momentum in the public mood on tax. Margaret Hodge had a very high profile and an easy source of media interest. I'll be going along to one of her forthcoming book signings to see if she can autograph a personal copy for ARC.

In recent months ARC has been kept up to date on how various Directorates intended to operate the End of Year PMR process. We raised concerns about variations in how this was being done, e.g. the nature and extent of supporting evidence. All of these sorts of issues are part of the consultation on the design of the new PMR system. 2017/18 promises to be more than a transitional year as there are suggestions that HMRC needs to experiment with trials of different models. We have told the Department that such variations will make it even harder to deliver performance assessments (with pay consequences) that are fair for everyone.

As Vicky noted in her recent blog DTUS met with Ruth Owen who explained what she felt was exciting work - on targets and the culture they engendered. Feedback suggests that targets can get in the way of being the best, not delivering it. Front line operational staff faced a very wider range of targets, not all of which aligned. She wanted to get to a place where every customer advisor had a much narrower set of targets, which would fit with the new PMR focus on development and coaching, supporting people, and no guided distribution. Ruth summed up the meeting - a very ambitious goal with huge cultural shift. She was aware of the challenges and noted TUs willingness to be involved and help. So if any members in Customer Services are seeing this new approach in action and have any comments or concerns, please let me or Vicky know.

Iain Campbell

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the union of choice for
senior managers and
professionals in HMRC