



## the information arc

October 2020

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### *Welcome*

As the French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr once said, “the more things change, the more they stay the same”. There have been several changes to lockdown rules since our last edition, but as I write this today the position for us remains as it was at the beginning of September – where we can work from home we are encouraged to do so. That being the case, the committee continues to work with the department on the issues and impact of Covid-19.

While our working environment remains the same, that doesn't mean that individually and collectively we stop working to change the department. By the time you receive this, you may have read the joint message from Jim Harra, ARC and PCS on updating your personal information in Online HR. We encourage you to update your diversity data as the department can only be truly inclusive if it understands the make-up of its staff. As Loz says in the joint message, “ARC supports you providing this information – it helps us act on your behalf. We understand that this information is sensitive and personal, but we absolutely know you can't be identified and it's only ever going to be used for sound purposes.”

Additionally, the People Survey for 2020 is now open and members will be receiving invites to complete it. Please do complete the survey and, to quote Loz again, “be brutally honest” when you do so. It is a direct way to signal where the department needs to change. In the autumn edition of arcnews (which should be landing on doorsteps soon), our very own Iain Campbell looks at the survey results from the previous 15 years.

The FDA Working Hours survey launched today. This will help us understand the individual circumstances of our members, how your working hours and working environment have been affected by the pandemic, and what steps HMRC has taken to look after your wellbeing. The responses and data we gather



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will help us in individual discussions and negotiations with employers, but also as we engage across the civil service looking at the future of work.

[Take part in the survey](#)

As always, if there is anything you would like to see in future editions or you have ideas on communication in general, please do not hesitate to contact the comms team.

Now on to the updates from President and Committee

*Scott McFarlane*

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### Update from ARC President

ARC President and Deputy President Loz and Helen have been busy in all the areas that you would expect them to be, with Pay & Contract Reform taking up a lot of their time at the moment. Discussions are still in confidence so there's not much that can be said at this stage.

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### *Return to offices*

"We've recently updated members following the change of Government advice that people should work from home where they can, and conversations are continuing on HMRC's plans to return essential roles to the offices. We're working closely with HR on the policies and the support available where a conversation is needed about potentially returning to the office.

ARC is focused on ensuring that we can fine tune conversations for the specific situations that our people are in and would always reiterate that nobody will be forced back into offices inappropriately, there need to be the right circumstances for the individual- determined by individual conversations."

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### *Members facing redundancy*

"We're still working with FDA and our legal advisors on the process to protect the interests of members who are potentially affected by the recent age discrimination judgement in the Elliott. This has taken much longer than we would have liked, and we apologise for the delay and uncertainty. As this affects more than just ARC members, a decision on the process is needed from FDA Executive Committee and they meet in early October."

Loz Hutton

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### Updates from Committee

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#### *Jonathan Kilner*

On behalf of ARC, Jonathan is continuing to engage in constructive meetings with Tax Academy and PCS colleagues on questions around Apprenticeships, which also impacts some Keystone members. We're keen for lessons to be learnt from the experience here and we hope to see a renewed focus on learning portfolios from a lines of business perspective.

Jonathan also engages with the department on behalf of our TSP members- the 2020 intake are likely to see a virtual induction event which ARC hope to be represented at. We'll continue to monitor any trainee issues as they develop.

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#### *Tom Langrish*

Tom would like to add a note of thanks to fellow committee members who have stepped in to cover his areas of responsibility following a recent bereavement. There are two specific colleagues who deserve a note of thanks here, but we won't name them as they'll know who they are.

Since his return to work Tom has continued to engage with Tax Academy to try to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on TSP course progression- discussions are both constructive and ongoing. From our perspective the recent exam window appeared to go well but what did those of you who are impacted think? Please do let us have your feedback on this. You can email Tom directly. Please include "TSP Exams" as the subject line.

Work is also ongoing with CCG, alongside David Cooper. The main area for discussion at the moment is the measures CCG is putting in place to support a safe and timely return for staff to the offices, in line with central guidance. As you can imagine, this changes on an almost daily basis but ARC will continue to ensure CCG only brings our people back into offices in a safe and coordinated



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way, which considers the concerns of individuals. Whilst Tom's specific responsibilities extend to LB, CA and ISBC within CCG he wants you to encourage to raise any issues with himself, Dave Cooper or your specific directorate rep.

Tom would also like to flag that he's the ARC rep for the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Centre which will be in Leeds. Please do send him any questions or concerns that you have in relation to this using.

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### *Vicky Johnson*

Since being elected as the President of our parent union, FDA in August 2020, Vicky Johnson has begun to realign her role and is getting plugged into all the important central issues from an FDA perspective. In the last month, the FDA have published a Civil Service Pensions update, alongside details of the Treasury

Public Sector Pension Consultation. Vicky continues to support ARC alongside that challenging role. She's been working alongside CSG on their welcomed and proactive stance on how to keep our people safe as we think about bringing people back to the office. Vicky also represented ARC in consultation on the timing of the 2020 Staff Survey.

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### *David Cooper*

Members in Campaigns and Projects will be aware of a project that has commenced to review working from home. Basically, the purpose is to establish whether, going forward, working from home can be an option for a longer-term operating model. The project involves all C & P staff. From the outset, DTUS were made aware of the project and throughout, there has been full and proper consultation.

Going forward, regular DTUS meetings have been set up to review and feedback. To this end, if any ARC members have any issues or concerns they wish to be raised please do not hesitate to contact David directly and he will take forward as required.



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### *Heather Morrison (Health & Safety)*

Covid-19 inevitably continues to dominate the H&S scene; the biggest news being that as many as possible of us were going to be sent back to work in the office so we could support the local Pret/Starbucks, followed quickly by the decision that we should again work at home wherever possible given the sharp rise in COVID infections. There may still be a move for people to go back to the office in much lower numbers. Some colleagues would prefer to be working in the office and others may find that their roles mean that they are asked to return. Your union is working to ensure that any return will be safe. For H&S, a local presence is vital as members have local knowledge and can see local safety issues. We are looking to reinvigorate ARC's network of local H&S reps as described in my recent article. You will get training, develop useful skills, get facilities time, and do a great service for your colleagues. Anyone interested in exploring this further please get in touch with me.

As illustration, one of the more obscure – but still important – recent H&S issues has been that of floor stickers warning to keep social distance. The issue was that they were not sticking to the floor (typically carpet), and curling up at the edges after a while, like the legendary British Rail sandwich, and so themselves becoming trip hazard. People had also been slipping on them when they were wet, leading to trip and slip injuries. There is a whole world of floor sticker diversity, previously unknown to me. Slipperiness is measured using a pendulum, and there are 5 standards of sticker from most to least slippery. After discussion with the unions HMRC has moved to using a much less slippery rating of sticker and reviewed the surfaces and locations in which they are used.

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### *Iain Campbell*

Prior to the opening of Edinburgh Regional Centre, Iain had priority access to visit the office, see the layout and ask questions on behalf of ARC members,



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alongside PCS reps. Progress seems to be going well. The next challenge is looking at how things will work practically for staff concerns and how the building is managed etc. This is expected to be via a house committee, we will have more updates for you on this as work progresses.

External engagement work has been continuing, albeit in a very different way. Iain has continued to attend and engage with lots of online sessions and seminars etc. Tax is likely to continue to be discussed frequently, and while it is, Iain will continue to raise arguments supporting an educated discussion, and of course, a well-funded HMRC. ARC continues to contribute to external pieces of research, and we know HMRC are aware of this and follow this work.

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### *Jim Rogers*

This month, Jim met with HR team in charge of performance and development conversations to several ongoing issues. They are going to be carrying out a review to find out how the PDC process has been working and are looking at whether they can provide examples of what "goals" look like. It has been a common request from staff.

In addition to that, they are looking to review the managing poor performance policy. Jim will keep us update on any developments as they happen.

Finally, a workplace adjustments trial is running in Bristol with a view to slimming down the process. This will be rolled out to other regional centres and, again, we will keep you updated on any developments.

Take care

*Information ARC Team*