

The Information ARC

June 2017



Welcome to your June edition of the **Information ARC** we've had a busy few months and this edition reflects some of what has been happening, I hope you find it useful and informative, as ever if you have any feedback please get in touch – paula@fda.org.uk

A Very Busy President!

It has been busy since conference, one committee meeting and many other meetings to fit in.

Pay

The remit has been signed off by the FST and we are now entering the formal negotiation stage. In reality we have the suggested figures from the pay team and there is little room for manoeuvre given what we want to do for the Band Ts and the constraints of 1%. There has now been a newsroom article and an undertaking to pay the award in July. This is a one month delay and will, for some, cause a spike in their pension contributions. I have asked the pay team to find a way to smooth that spike and they are working on that. When the details are announced we will send an ARC Update.

Committee Roles

We spent some time reallocating roles at Committee on 13 June, we now have a combined ARC News and website (www.arcunion.org.uk) team who will be looking at reducing the number of ARC News and moving towards a fully functioning website. I am aware that there are some issues with the forum and I have asked for a discussion with the website team to try and work out solutions.

I will arrange to publish the revised allocations on the website and in ARC News.

Expenses

There is currently no treasurer so expenses are to be claimed from Loz Hutton (who has taken over from Graham Flew) and receipts sent to me. The address is on the revised form which will be forwarded to Centre Reps shortly. Please try not to claim anything you do not have a receipt for.

BOF Locations

The Voluntary Redundancy process for our colleagues who are at risk in the second phase of closures was launched on 22 June. This means that the Meaningful Consultation process begins for those staff who are outside of reasonable daily travel. I will shortly receive details of the names and grades involved so will be able to identify any members affected. I will then get in touch with those members to ask what they need from ARC through the Meaningful Consultation process. I have already been contacted by a couple of members and I am researching answers for them - if you want to contact me please do and I will try my best to find out what you need or ask for what you want. I can't guarantee success on the latter though!

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A full write up of conference will be in the next ARC News but there has been a slight delay in the typing of the transcript. It should be under way now and meanwhile Steve McFarlane has begun the preparatory work. He also has the photos (as do I, the memory stick has just arrived), I cannot view them at home because both usb ports are taken on this computer so I have to wait until I'm in the office next week. We must remember to give credit to the photographer, Stephen Baird-Parker, if we publish any of them.

Partial Retirement

I raised this issue with Jon Thompson in January. It related to those of us who are in offices outside London that will close and the migration path is in London. The pension received by these individuals will be abated by the extra salary they receive for being in London and they will suffer both tax and NIC on the extra salary (rather than just tax on the pension). This will leave them worse off, especially when you include the tax and NIC on the DTA payments. The department's response, just received, is bitterly disappointing and I will be writing to them to ask why they have not considered making an application for an exception case to be made. I need any members potentially affected by this to tell me if they feel strongly enough about the suggested solutions to take it further - give me a call or drop me a quick email please.

Vicky Johnson

Performance Management

As many of you are aware we are entering a period of trialling new systems to replace our current divisive and unfair PMR system next year.

The way the consultation has been handled by HMRC is a real example of the Department and the Trades Unions coming together to try and get something right the first time, we were a key part of all the early conversations, full members of the project group set up to look for the way forward and both myself and Jim Rogers have felt that we have been valued members of the team and not just added on because they felt it was a necessary evil (which I have felt in other areas in the past!). We have worked closely with the project leads to get the workshops which many of you attended up and running and asking the right questions and we have now had a "test drive" of the phone sessions which will hopefully allow those of you who couldn't get to a workshop to have your say. It isn't without issues, there were some technical glitches with the system but we are assured these will be addressed before the mass roll out.

Much of the content of the trials is promising and we are keen that this stage of the process is done correctly, we have already had information from one area where the guidance for managers wasn't clear enough so if you are involved in a trial and you have some feedback which will improve the system, or just make it easier for you to understand please get in touch with me or Jim Rogers and we will feed everything back to the project team and get any required changes made.

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Paula Houghton

PMR Outturn Action

ARC has written to Rebekah Ayres, the People Director, expressing its concern about the disadvantage suffered by people with certain protected characteristics (especially ethnicity, disability and gender) in the performance appraisal system. We're not satisfied with the explanations we have been given, and we have never been offered an objective justification for this less favourable treatment. We're considering taking formal action. We don't want these problems to be replicated in any new system. If you're disabled, non-white, or male, or any combination of these and other protected characteristics, and you've either received a "needs development" or have missed out on an "exceed", we'd like to talk to you about it. We're also interested in hearing about your experience if you're part time, or had some time off sick, and this seems to have affected your marking.

Helen Baird-Parker 03000 586141 helen.baird-parker@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

ARC Casework - Computer Misuse

Recently the casework team have seen quite a few cases referred to it where computer misuse has been alleged. These 'spikes,' do occur periodically in part as the employer does, every so often crackdown on certain things.

We are because of our jobs entrusted with what is often very sensitive data and we have an obligation to treat this securely and with respect. Any breaches of the published data security guidance could lead to investigation and have serious implications. Whilst ARC does have a huge degree of experience defending members interests where computer misuse is alleged, we can only ask members to be careful and not put themselves in a position where they misuse could be alleged.

Finally you may all know that Graham Flew has retired from HMRC as has passed the mantel of casework lead back to me. ARC owes a huge debt to Graham for all of his hard work helping members at a time when they needed their union most. I know you will all join me in a huge vote of thanks to Graham wishing him well for a long happy retirement.

John Parkhouse

Changes in WMBC

Rather than email you all - because there have been lots of changes recently across WMBC - I thought that I would use *The Information ARC* to update members in 'Charities, Public Bodies and Complex Employment, about outcomes from my meetings with Bozena and Ian Young, [and of course PCS - although they weren't at this one].

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So we last had a chat on 5th June. Basically WMBC , Wealthy and Mid-Sized Business, structured thus:

- Juliet Roche: Assets
- Bozena Hillyer: Charities, Public Bodies and Complex Employment
- Sara O'Byrne: Insight, Understanding and Risk
- Andy Leggett: Mid-sized Business
- Linda Allen: People, Planning and Performance
- Nicole Newbury: Wealthy, [was High Net Worth Unit and Affluent].

Bozena's area now has around 860 people spread across 24 offices. Bozena is keen to visit as many as she can and has already visited quite a few. She will have people in everyone of the new regional centres in due course. Feedback she's received has some common themes - a lot of trainees which means experienced people are really stretched. Has done a stock-take of skills needed - identified digital & leadership as the two things that need attention. Generally people are really enthusiastic, they care, want to get things right and are interested in changing things and getting things right.

There have been some additions to the G7 cadre including from the Large Partnership Unit.

No members had contacted me with any issues that they wanted me to take forwards and so I asked is the quality regime staying as it was and how's it going? It only came in from April, having been tested last year. Initial feedback is very positive. Much more focussed on the manager taking back responsibility for driving up quality standards. It seems to be going quite well at present. The system relies on value judgements rather than 'tick box' process checks and encourages managers/technical specialists to focus on providing support where it's most needed. It was identified that there are some tweaks that are needed. Will learn what needs to change in the basket of indicators as they go along. No negative feedback has been received to date. The challenge is around how it's strengthened moving forwards. On WPA, the business are asking managers to undertake reviews based on 6 hallmarks and only commenting on them when necessary. There will be certain things that the business has data on that can indicate quality improvement is needed e.g. delay.

I asked about how the Performance Management process had gone at year end, how did the stats sit against previous years, were there lots of appeals etc. I was told that since there has been a restructuring benchmarking against previous years wasn't possible. Bozena was only aware of one appeal at that time. Looking forwards, the next scheduled session is 25 September so do please drop me a line if you want me to take up any issues on your behalf, I'm more than happy to do that - ARC is here to represent your interests.

Michelle Wyer

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Keeping ARC in the Public Eye

As they say a lot of water has flowed under the bridge of a General Election. At various post-election meetings I've been asked by externals on what ARC thought of the result. My answer has been that if it means the end of the 1% pay cap then that's a prize worth having.

Internally Vicky and I (along with PCS) met with the HR team in CCG to discuss a range of issues, including talent and recruitment, reports of blocks on level transfers (if you know of any tell us), diversity outcomes around PMR, and how to evaluate the recent training given by ICAS across a range of grades. Your views or experiences in any of these will help us focus the Department on any problems.

I have a meeting with Mary Aiston for WMBC scheduled for the 4th July. I'd be glad to take up any issues members want to raise. So just email me or ring (on the GAL as Iain Campbell FIS.)

ARC was invited to several meetings on some wider issues around tax and tax administration. These are not the high profile cases of international "tax dodging", or the joys of Multi Lateral Instruments, but the more prosaic areas of tax simplification or the way the tax system taxes employees, workers, and owner-mangers. This has had its high profile cases (Uber and Deliveroo) but it's not really in the headlines. Yet I heard the IFS suggest our differential treatment of employees/workers/self-employed cost up to £16bn a year. We were able to raise our profile as a union that cared about the health of the tax administration. But I also learned from Swedish TU that unions in Sweden represent the self-employed, including giving them advice on fee rates! Not sure if the UK is ready for that but I saw photos of their big recruiting posters on the Stockholm Metro.

Finally, some of you may know I try to be active on social media. Although I do so in my own name a lot of what I say directly reflects members' concerns and feedback. So I was really pleased that doing this has led members of the ICAEW to vote me at 37 of the top 50 most influential sources of finance news and information in social media. So I take that as vote for all of us!

Iain Campbell

Keeping you Healthy!

Quite often people get very focussed on the "safety" part of the H&S agenda and forget the "health" part, lots of discussions around furniture, buildings, trip hazards and access requirements but we forget that all of these things contribute to our health. Working in an uncomfortable and unsafe environment contributes to many types of illness, not least stress and musculo skeletal problems.

The "health" aspect of H&S is one of the vital areas Trade Unions can contribute to our members wellbeing and happiness at work and is something you can help with at various levels. We always need people in local offices to take on the H&S roles, for many this is a great opportunity to be involved in shaping your workspace and

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really helping colleagues, especially with the transition to new offices, regional centres and stepping stone sites leading to a lot of unsettled members and discussions on how to meet the needs of everyone in these new, often less spacious accommodations. If you'd like to get involved please get in touch to discuss what is required and how you can help.

I'm also looking into the possibility of Mental Health First Aid training, the course is highly regarded and I think the content would be very helpful to many of us working with large teams and for caseworkers who frequently deal with people at very difficult times of their lives. If this is something you would be interested in, and you feel it would benefit you, your staff, local members or ARC generally please get in touch and I'll keep you in the loop if we decide that we can offer the courses. For more information please visit the Mental Health First Aid England website at www.mhfaengland.org

Paula Houghton

100PS Centre News

ARC 100PS Centre are having a special single themed meeting on 4 July at 15:00-16:00 in room 1/53 to discuss issues around the restack of 100PS which will affect everyone and the move to CW which will affect many people. We would like to hear your issues and concerns so that we can ensure effective consultation with HMRC on matters like reasonable daily travel, whether you are able to move to CW at all, excess expenses including things like childcare, availability of desk space, personal space and suitable IT. We will be able to immediately answer some of your questions about HMRC's current plans, and find out the answers to other questions you may have.

Please feel free to get in touch by phone or email at any time - ARC Reps will always be happy to talk through your issues.

Helen Baird-Parker 03000 586141 helen.baird-parker@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk