



## the information arc

November 2020

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### *Welcome*

**As we write this edition of Information ARC, we are looking ahead to a winter where we continue to work from home, in various tiers/levels of restrictions.**

Anecdotally we know that members across the department are talking about wellbeing and how best we can support ourselves and our colleagues. For examples, some areas are contemplating an embargo on setting up meetings at certain times of the day e.g. 12–1pm. The idea would be to allow people a bit of flexibility and a clear break from the desk and Surface Pro. While an intriguing idea, it will only work with everyone's agreement. What do you think? What are you doing to support yourself and colleagues? Please get in touch with us to let us know what steps are being taken in your area, or what ideas you would like to see implemented. We will look to share ideas for best practice and, where appropriate, for committee members to discuss directly with the business.

In addition to the support we can offer each other, as the festive period fast approaches we recognise that some of our members and their families may be experiencing financial hardship which might make for an uncomfortable Christmas time this year. If you are in this position, please consider approaching the Trustees of the ARC Benevolent Fund—Joshua Flew, Hayley Moran and Tom Langrish—to discuss what support may be available. You can also contact the Trustees via any member of the committee.

Any approach to the fund to discuss assistance will be held in strict confidence.

Although the time of year brings issues, please note that the ARC Benevolent Fund isn't just for Christmas. It's here all year round to support our members and their families face financial difficulty.

*Julie, Scott and Bec*



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### Update from ARC President

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#### *Pay*

You will have seen my recent update of the pay talks and there's not a lot I can add to that at this stage in terms of the detail of the discussions. We are working through a significant number of issues that each side wants to address with the pay and contract structure and I'm sure you'll understand this is not always going to be an easy discussion and will take time.

I want to reassure members who are potentially leaving HMRC before any pay award can be made that they will still receive any increases that arise. If any pay award is made after you have left then you will receive a payment in respect the back dated pay up to your last date of service. Similarly, your pension will automatically be recalculated to reflect the increased rate of pay.

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#### *Employee Relations Agreement*

We've been working on revising the ERA for some time and I'm pleased to say that there was a virtual signing between myself, Jim Harra and Lorna Merry from PCS. The new agreement provides a clear and consistent framework for engagement with the unions at all levels in HMRC and is a positive step forward.

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#### *Working in the office and at home*

We continue to work closely with HMRC, both from a people policy and health & safety to perspective, to ensure that members can continue to work safely and effectively at home and if appropriate in the office. The agreed position with HMRC remains that nobody will be compelled to return to the office if they did not feel comfortable in doing so.

Loz Hutton—[loz.hutton@fda.org.uk](mailto:loz.hutton@fda.org.uk)



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### Updates from the Deputy President

*As you will have seen from both the Pay reform announcements and the Employee Relations Agreement, HMRC is promoting join a union and praising the co-operative working arrangement with union reps. You will see that more going forward, and if you have a colleague not in a union who would like to join please encourage them to look at the information on the intranet or the FDA website. Don't forget this includes Keystone for our HO and SO colleagues.*

Following the Building Our Future changes, we have several buildings closing at the end of the year. Due to the current changes and challenges following Covid-19, and with ARC encouragement, the department has agreed to consider extra flexibility for those due to leave by 31st Dec 2020, up to and including full-time working. This is a positive step for those who want to stay with HMRC. If you are in this process, or you are managing someone there is good support available. If you have any issues, please do get in touch with an ARC rep.

*Helen Baird-Parker*

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### Updates from across the business

Continuing our regular engagement with WMBC, Kenny Mitchell has had a dial-in with Nicole Newbury, Director. Topics covered included the pulse survey, continued resourcing and people committee work. Kenny has also spoken to DD Kerry Singleton following a concern raised that the Complex Evasion Program (CEP) were impacted by inadequate resource. Kerry is fully committed to the program and the issues are being addressed.

Tom Langrish has been attending weekly discussions with CCG considering their operational response to Covid-19, with a particular focus on supporting managers and colleagues, especially to enable those who need to return to the office to do so safely, when necessary.



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Tom has regular quarterly meetings with the directors for both LB and Counter Avoidance coming up so if you have any issues, or want to raise a concern, please let Tom know.

Fahad Akhtar, while providing vital casework support to members, has continued to work closely with FIS SMT regarding the guidance/protocols in place for staff who have to perform visits during the pandemic. He is happy to note that discussions have been positive with FIS SMT sharing both ARC and PCS's concerns and taking appropriate steps, including the provision of PPE, to ensure staff safety.

This month Paula Houghton has mainly been dealing with the redesign of the 'VAT infrastructure and soft drinks industry levy' policy team. Three years ago, there were 8 members of the team in Liverpool and it has grown to 60. While the redesign will ensure that the structure of the team is correct, ARC wants to support the business commitment to maintaining a credible policy function in Liverpool/outside of London.

Claire White works with Customer Insight and Design and RIS Directorates. Conversations with both are constructive and Claire feels that responses to Covid-19 remain reasonable and the recent response to Diversity and Inclusion work has been reassuring and positive. As always though, if you work in either of those Directorates and have any questions or concerns that you'd like ARC to raise on your behalf, do get in touch.

Finally, the new TSP20 trainees are joining HMRC, and while their induction looks a bit different due to homeworking, ARC will still be having a session with them.

Centres often do different introductions/lunches etc for the new trainees. Again, we know this will be different this year, but trainees working from home will no doubt enjoy the opportunity to get to know some of their colleagues. If you are holding a session, Jonathan Kilner and Tom Langrish can dial in or otherwise contribute, so please do get in touch.



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### *Casework*

Claire White has been involved in ARC casework and wanted to share some great practice that she's seen recently. A member put together a line by line statement response for decision maker which was then provided ahead of the meeting and helped to make the meeting flow better and conclude more quickly- just beware of disclosure rules as any documents may end up being shared.

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### *Diversity & Inclusion*

Jim Rogers is new to the Diversity & Inclusion Lead role and has a number of meeting set up with Departmental Champions now as follows: LGBT on 16 November, Carers on 17 November, Social Mobility on 7 December, and Religion & Belief on 11 December. There will also be a Disability discussion in the pipeline too. Is there anything that members would like Jim to raise or you would simply want to highlight to him? If so, please do get in touch.

In particular at the moment we're interested in hearing from members on religion and belief. Jim acknowledges that he has a lot of learning to do in this area to really get up to speed on issues for our membership. If you think you can help him with that, feel free to get in touch.

### *Information ARC Team*