

HM Revenue & Customs meets with key stakeholders to discuss service delivery

On 7 September HM Revenue & Customs' (HMRC's) Chairman Mike Clasper hosted a meeting at 100 Parliament Street to discuss HMRC service delivery.

The meeting had been requested by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, the Chartered Institute of Taxation, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, the Association of Accounting Technicians, the Association of Taxation Technicians and the Low Incomes Tax Reform Group, in response to the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee's recommendation that HMRC should work closely with the professional bodies, tax charities and businesses to improve the end-to-end experience of dealing with HMRC. The charities Tax Aid and TaxHelp for Older People were also represented.

The meeting, which included senior managers in HMRC, considered HMRC's current service delivery statistics and how they are compiled. The statistics show that in recent months there has been a significant improvement in overall post handling times, but HMRC recognised that this improvement is not consistently reflected in the actual experience of taxpayers and agents. It was agreed that the whole area of post handling and processing should be looked at in depth to understand how far the recent improvements are reflected in the actual experience of taxpayers and agents, and why the experience and perception of HMRC's customers is sometimes different from that of HMRC managers. The meeting also considered telephone-based services where similar issues arose.

It was agreed that as a first stage, work should be taken forward quickly and on three fronts:

- Post processing and handling should be looked at in detail to establish where problems still exist and how they can be resolved (and HMRC's performance measures reviewed where necessary to ensure that they are credible and effective). This work will be complemented by a review of the following processes where it is believed improvements can be made: non Self Assessment repayment claims, automated PAYE coding notices and practical issues relating to deceased estates.
- A number of agents and charity representatives will spend time with HMRC's front line service delivery teams to look at processes in detail from a customer perspective and make recommendations as appropriate.
- HMRC will carry out structured visits to the offices of a number of practitioners and charities to gain an in depth understanding of service delivery as seen from a customer perspective.

The intention is to pursue this initiative within a very stringent timeframe to obtain tangible fast track results with a view to facilitating quick resolution in a number of areas. The joint initiative will commence on 3 October and progress on the initial three work streams will be reviewed by 30 November.

Mike Clasper said 'Tax agents along with the charity and voluntary sector are vitally important customer and stakeholder groups for HMRC and I welcome their offer to work with us so we can better understand how to improve. We know that they and their clients are seriously impacted when we get things wrong and we are determined to deliver a better service.'

We need to get a better understanding of the interaction of our customers and stakeholders with HMRC and of their experiences in resolving tax issues. Working with agent colleagues inside and outside HMRC will provide that knowledge and lead to better services for all of our customers.'

The professional bodies and tax charities said 'We and HMRC are working very closely together to try to resolve a number of service delivery issues. This exercise is emphatically not a 'talking shop' and where appropriate we intend to make public the results and the action to be taken from the work streams we have embarked on.'