Knock knock! Who’s there? – HMRC Co-design workshops

General Features **Management of taxes**

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HMRC has been holding a number of co-design workshops to seek feedback on the design of a new ‘front door’ to HMRC online services.

In July and August, ATT and CIOT representatives attended HMRC co-design workshops for an advance preview of HMRC’s current thinking on their front door for agents. By front door HMRC mean the portal through which agents access HMRC online services.

Currently, agents access the various HMRC online services through one or more Government Gateway accounts. In addition to existing online services for self-assessment, VAT, corporation tax and so on, some agents will also have set up their new Agent Services Account (ASA) to access the Trust Registration Service or MTD pilots. Further details on the ASA can be found in the article ‘Digital connections’ on page 34 of this issue of *Tax Adviser*.

In future, HMRC are looking to build on the services offered through the ASA, but before they can offer more services and greater access to client data, HMRC need to ensure that the *front door* to the ASA is highly secure. The workshop focused on the process of registering for an ASA as a new agent and the necessary steps and security measures that this involves. HMRC needs to know that when an agent seeks access to online services, they are who they say they are.

Participants also had the opportunity to comment on how clients will authorise their agents to act in respect of their tax affairs in future. The intention is to replace the paper 64-8 with a digital approval process which is likely to involve the client confirming the appointment via their own online tax account. This already occurs for returns in respect of Annual Tax on Enveloped Dwellings (ATED). A paper route will need to be retained for the digitally excluded.

While at these early stages we cannot share much of the detail discussed, we would like to emphasise how constructive these workshops can be. It is an opportunity for HMRC to explain to agents why they design processes in the way that they do and demonstrate to agents their genuine security concerns. HMRC are not trying to make our lives difficult! In turn, the agents attending, ranging from sole traders to the Big 4, are able to identify where certain steps or processes will give them issues in practice and make suggestions for improvement. By working together, and understanding each other's perspectives, the end result should hopefully be a well-designed, secure front door that works for both agents and HMRC.

We are anticipating that further co-design workshops on different aspects of agent services will be held in the coming months. If you would be interested in attending any workshops in your area please get in touch at atttechnical@att.org.uk or technical@tax.org.uk.