Welcome to the May Technical newsdesk

Welcomes

22 April 2022

Those of you who also write regular articles will appreciate the apparent speed at which each deadline comes around. While pondering what to cover in this month's introduction, HMRC's monthly performance report for February (tinyurl.com/29sy7eyx) arrived in my email inbox. As they used to say on Gladiators, let's take a look at those stats.

Telephone performance is a key metric. After all, listening to recorded messages before being put on hold is not a productive use of anyone's time. In February, the average speed of answer was 12 minutes and 35 seconds (timed from after the recorded messages have ended). Telephone performance has fluctuated over recent months, but remains at over 12 minutes on average across the year to date. While there are no performance targets for 2021/22 (something we have raised with HMRC), the last published target was five minutes.

Performance on correspondence continues to improve. In February, 52.4% of correspondence was cleared within 15 working days of receipt, compared to just 29.7% in April 2021. Some of these improvements have come at the expense of telephone performance (for example, the recent Friday closures of some telephone lines), but HMRC's stock of post is now back to pre-pandemic levels – though still amounting to some 1.9 million items of correspondence.

Many of these improvements can be seen on the HMRC service dashboard (tinyurl.com/2bdz3azh). At the time of writing, 21 of the 27 service lines are showing 'normal service', which compares favourably to its launch at the beginning of February when 17 of those service lines were showing delays. That is a significant recovery in just two months. Of course, this is not the full picture, as there are many examples of old correspondence still waiting to be actioned, even if current correspondence is being dealt with timeously. If you have such examples, please

send them to technical@ciot.org.uk so we can highlight them to HMRC.

Consistent with our charitable objectives which are (to paraphrase) to make the tax system better, we have recently reached out to our volunteer network for ideas to help HMRC improve their systems and processes, including how the expertise of agents can be leveraged and the pressure on HMRC's resources relieved. We will be reviewing those suggestions (along with our own) and surveying members to gauge their popularity. We will then discuss them with HMRC. Suggestions received to date indicate that small changes can make a big difference.