CIOT Vice-President's page

Welcomes

01 April 2019

Thank you for being a friend

Apart from a romantic visit to Brighton with my better half (!), my other highlight of February was catching up with Victoria Todd, who heads up the CIOT's Low Income Tax Reform Group (LITRG). Founded in 1998 by the then CIOT President John Andrews, LITRG was set up to represent the needs of unrepresented low income and often vulnerable taxpayers.

We should all be extremely proud of the dedicated and skilled work that LITRG carry out. Given the large noise that many other tax issues of the day generate, I sometimes feel that the sterling contribution of LITRG often goes unnoticed. I therefore felt a pressing need to 'balance the books' in this column!

LITRG's 'radar' picks up and tracks various issues that affect low income groups, which include pensioners, students, migrants, gig workers, the self-employed, carers, those with disabilities and any low income employees. It engages in constant detailed and practical research to ensure that any adverse impact on their tax, NIC liabilities, tax credits, and/or state benefits entitlement are identified. As LITRG has built up many productive and collaborative relationships with HMRC, the DWP, Treasury, and Parliament, appropriate representations, dialogue and solutions can often be made and are usually well received. Victoria enthused that LITRG is often asked to comment on draft legislation and guidance before it is issued for general consultation.

LITRG also boasts four websites: the main LITRG website, Tax Guide for Students, RevenueBenefits, and Disability Tax Guide. These websites are an excellent resource for those needing help (as well as for CIOT members and students!). In 2018, some 4.8 million users accessed these websites and LITRGs universal credit tool.

More recently, many taxpayers facing potential difficulties with the April 2019 loan charge continue to benefit from LITRG's excellent guidance on this vexatious area. While LITRG does not have the resources to provide advice on individual cases, the team will try and point people to helpful information on the LITRG websites and if needed will refer cases to one of the other excellent tax charities (Tax Aid or Tax Help for Older People) with whom they work closely.

Victoria emphasised that LITRG always values hearing from people and their experiences of the system so they can use that evidence in their consultation responses and wider work.

Victoria proudly announced LITRG's objectives for 2019 as follows:

- To continue improving the presentation, functionality and content of its valuable websites;
- Build on and increase effectiveness of LITRG's engagement with its internal and external stakeholders; and
- Concentrate its limited resources on areas which add most value to those LITRG represent.
- It is clear that LITRG makes a tremendous contribution to the CIOT's charitable mandate and increases the CIOT's profile across a wide range of stakeholder groups. I am sure that members will be pleased to see this is another way our profession is putting something back for the common good.

I thoroughly enjoyed my meeting with Victoria. I do not think I have ever met anyone else who has such a detailed and practical knowledge of the UK's benefits system and its interaction with our tax regime. John Andrews will be pleased to know that LITRG remains in very good hands.

Good luck to Victoria and her dedicated team of professionals, supported by the volunteers of the LITRG committee. I, for one, will continue to mention their good work at every available opportunity!

Peter Rayney
Vice-President, CIOT