Poor HMRC service levels harming business, survey finds

Briefings



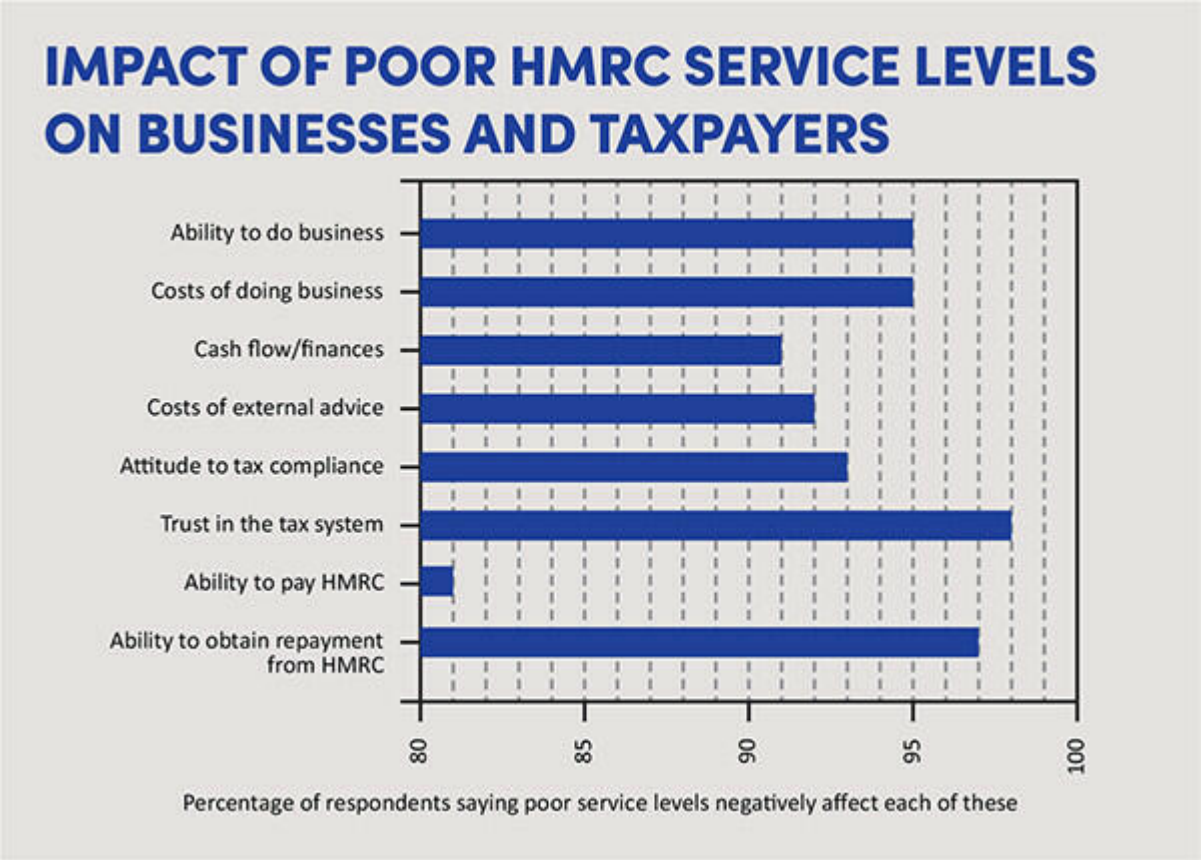
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A CIOT survey has found dissatisfaction with HMRC service levels among both tax agents and taxpayers.

A majority of respondents to a survey conducted by CIOT said that poor service levels make it harder to do business, and that they doubt improvements will be made in the coming year.

The online survey was conducted in July and August 2023 to understand perceptions of HMRC service levels. 760 responses were received.

Image



Among the findings were:

- 94% of respondents were either ‘somewhat’ or ‘extremely’ dissatisfied with HMRC’s service levels.
- 96% were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ confident that these will significantly improve over the next 12 months.
- 95% said that poor service levels have a ‘moderate’ or ‘significant’ negative impact on the ability to do business.

CIOT President Gary Ashford said: ‘These results speak for themselves. Tax advisers and taxpayers have told us of their deep dissatisfaction with HMRC’s service levels. Poor service levels can have a significant impact on their ability to do business. Worryingly, they have little confidence that things will improve any time soon.

‘Poor HMRC performance, such as delays in processing registration for taxes and the inability to quickly resolve matters doesn’t just harm the tax system, but has an impact on the wider economic climate too. Businesses are left unable to trade properly, individuals are without much needed repayments, and costs spiral as they

repeatedly chase HMRC for progress updates.'

The survey indicated an appetite among the profession to make greater use of HMRC's online services, though in most instances telephone contact was a necessity. 89% of respondents said the reason for their contact could not have been resolved digitally, while 80% said they would make use of online resources if it would resolve their issue.

Respondents also indicated that they were experiencing long wait times to be connected to an HMRC adviser. 58% of respondents said they had waited for more than half an hour to speak with HMRC's dedicated helpline for agents, a figure that increased to 85% for other HMRC helplines.

Respondents indicated they were more likely to receive an 'extremely good' or 'good service' from the Agent Dedicated Line (27%), compared to other HMRC helplines (13%). Conversely, 34% of respondents rated the dedicated agent service as 'poor' or 'extremely poor', compared to 55% for other helplines.

Webchat, the facility currently being promoted by HMRC as an alternative to phoning, received even worse ratings, with 65% rating it 'poor' or 'extremely poor'. Similarly, HMRC's 'mainstream' guidance on GOV.UK was not considered helpful, with 32% of respondents rating it 'poor' or 'extremely poor', but in the results of those who responded in their capacity as a taxpayer that number increased to 57%.

While respondents said the quality of most HMRC products was 'adequate', over 40% rated HMRC's online forms as 'poor' or 'extremely poor'.

Worryingly, 20% of respondents said they would 'give up' if they were unable to get through to speak with an HMRC adviser.

Some of the comments from respondents:

'If it was possible to solve the issue online, I would. Nobody wants to waste their life trying to phone HMRC.'

'It's very hard to charge a client for chasing HMRC for a response monthly for a year!'

‘It is not the actual staff, they are doing their best, it is the lack of staff.’

The full findings of the survey can be read at: www.tax.org.uk/ciot-survey-into-hmrc-s-service-levels