Individuals Stakeholder Forum and Additional Needs Working Group

Briefings



27 September 2024

As part of our ongoing spotlights focusing on our engagement with HMRC and policymakers, this month we take a look at the work of the Individuals Stakeholder Forum and the Additional Needs Working Group.

The Individuals Stakeholder Forum and the Additional Needs Working Group are two important consultative forums established by HMRC to enhance the delivery of services to individual taxpayers, particularly those who are unrepresented or have additional needs.

These forums are attended by LITRG technical officers, along with other professional bodies and voluntary sector organisations, such as the tax charities, welfare rights organisations and charities representing people with disabilities.

The Individuals Stakeholder Forum

This serves as HMRC's primary consultation platform for the voluntary and community sectors. The Individuals Stakeholder Forum provides a space for HMRC to discuss the implications of proposed changes to policies, products and processes that could affect individuals. LITRG, along with other stakeholders, are able to offer early feedback on proposed initiatives and guidance, helping to ensure that the diverse needs of individual taxpayers are considered and that changes are clearly communicated.

LITRG's membership of this forum has established a vital two-way communication route with HMRC and the relationships built up via our involvement with the forum have been important to our work and mission. This has included:

- feeding into the development of HMRC's internal Digital Inclusion Strategy;
- ongoing dialogue with the team responsible for Simple Assessment and the collection of tax on state pensioners;
- presentations from teams in HMRC developing new interactive tools and services, allowing us to raise concerns and suggest improvements prior to launch;
- follow-up 'walk-throughs' for new services, enabling LITRG to provide better user-focused guidance on its website; and
- providing post-launch feedback on measures introduced where prior stakeholder engagement was not possible.

The Additional Needs Working Group

The Additional Needs Working Group is focused on supporting customers who require extra assistance when using HMRC services. The group's purpose is to help HMRC address equality issues, identify and explore ways to remove barriers faced by certain taxpayers, share best practice for those with additional needs and work towards a more accessible tax system.

The forum provides stakeholders with a space to share experiences and feedback on the impact of HMRC's strategies on customers with additional needs. LITRG's involvement means that we can give a voice to individuals requiring extra support and ensure that their needs are reflected in service development.

Making Tax Digital tends to be a rolling agenda item for the Additional Needs Working Group meetings, albeit at rather high level. The broader 'drive to digital' is

also a consistent theme, and stakeholders continually advocate on behalf of those who are digitally excluded or digitally unconfident, holding HMRC to account in ensuring that non-digital routes are available and accessible to those that need them.

Both the Individuals Stakeholder Forum and the Additional Needs Working Group play a crucial role in improving HMRC’s engagement with individual taxpayers, many of whom are unrepresented, and LITRG very much values its attendance at both.