Spotlight on HMRC’s Child Services Consultation Group

Briefings



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HMRC’s Child Services Consultation Group is the main channel through which HMRC consults with external stakeholders on matters relating to benefits and credits – including child benefit, guardian’s allowance and tax-free childcare – as well as legacy issues arising from the closure of the tax credits system.

Replacing the former Tax Credits Consultation Forum, the Child Services Consultation Group (CSCG) brings together representatives from a range of external organisations to provide feedback, insight and constructive challenge to HMRC. Members of the LITRG team attend these meetings to give a voice to unrepresented taxpayers.

The terms of reference for the group sets out HMRC’s public commitment to consult with its customers on all major policy and operational issues, and to improving the customer experience in line with HMRC’s Charter. The group acts as a sounding board for new initiatives and policy proposals from HMRC and ministers, as well as a

communication channel for sharing operational updates or raising emerging problems that affect claimants.

The group usually meets quarterly and includes a wide range of organisations, most of whom are from the voluntary and community sectors – such as Citizens Advice, British Red Cross and Child Poverty Action Group.

Regular agenda items

Meetings usually include updates on HMRC's telephony, post and online services relating to legacy tax credits, child benefit and childcare services (including tax-free childcare). Discussions also cover live operational issues – such as managing tax credit debt, ongoing mandatory reconsiderations and appeals, and any issues identified as the finalisation of tax credit awards nears an end.

Other agenda items include discussion of any legislative changes. For example, it discussed a recent extension to the timeframe for claiming tax-free childcare when starting work or returning from leave.

Engagement outside of the meeting programme

Outside of the meetings, CSCG members can raise queries or concerns directly with the group's secretariat. For example, HMRC stops child benefit automatically on 31 August on or after a child's 16th birthday unless the child benefit claimant confirms their child is staying on in approved education or training.

LITRG recently received questions via social media channels about this confirmation process, which were raised with HMRC. We were then able to clarify the position in an article on the LITRG website (see tinyurl.com/2hyc8rrh)

Occasionally, HMRC also invites group members to review draft guidance or correspondence before publication, ensuring stakeholder input helps improve clarity and customer understanding.

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