Announcement on tax adviser regulation welcomed

Briefings



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ATT and CIOT have welcomed the government’s decision not to regulate tax advisers and instead to work in partnership with the sector to raise standards in the tax advice market. The government made the announcement on Budget day, 26 November.

Emma Rawson, ATT’s Director of Public Policy, welcomed the clarity provided by the announcement. ‘With the forthcoming mandatory registration of tax agents, and the transition of anti-money laundering supervision from professional bodies to the Financial Conduct Authority, tax advisers already face significant changes over the next few years,’ she observed.

Ellen Milner, Director of Public Policy at the CIOT, also welcomed the clarity provided by the decision, which she noted had been pending since the previous government consulted on this area last year.

Both bodies agreed that more needs to be done to raise standards in the tax advice market to ensure that taxpayers are not given poor advice.

‘There must be a focus on raising standards and introducing safeguards in order to significantly reduce the risk of poor-quality or misleading guidance being given to taxpayers,’ said Rawson. She said she looked forward to HMRC building on the introduction of the agent register and to ‘future discussions about a clearer, more coherent approach to raising standards.’

Milner welcomed the opportunity ‘to work collaboratively with HMRC to address the unacceptable behaviour of the small number of bad actors who cast a shadow over the excellent work of the vast majority of tax agents.’ She stressed the importance ‘that any measures the government introduces to raise standards are well-targeted, proportionate and do not bring in regulation by HMRC by the back door. Any future regulatory model should build on the work of professional bodies in ensuring their members meet professional standards rather than introducing a new standalone regulator.’

Both directors emphasised the importance of continued dialogue between HMRC and the profession.