

Spotlight on the Representative Bodies Steering Group

Briefings



21 June 2024

In the first of a new series of spotlights which focus on our engagement with HMRC and policymakers, we take a look at the work of the Representative Bodies Steering Group (RBSG).

The RBSG is an important forum that engages with professional bodies, intermediaries, software developers and senior HMRC managers. It helps to advise on strategic decisions about HMRC's performance, including customer service, its digital strategy, and the impact of these on agents. We have engaged with senior HMRC staff in similar forums for many years. Prior to RBSG being established a few years ago, we had similar engagement with HMRC under the auspices of what was known as the Joint Initiatives Steering Group.

CIOT, ATT and LITRG are all represented at RBSG through a combination of staff and volunteers. Other members of RBSG include the main accounting and tax bodies, and representatives from the software industry.

The Steering Group is chaired by the Director General for Customer Strategy and Tax Design, Jonathan Athrow. We meet every two months to discuss HMRC's customer service and other strategic matters which affect its digital services, agents and the health and operation of the tax system.

Three working groups report to RBSG: the Agents Digital Design Advisory Group; the Additional Needs Working Group; and the Issues Overview Group. We will look at the activities of those groups in later spotlights.

A standing item on the RBSG agenda is HMRC's performance. Members will know that this has been a key focus for CIOT, ATT and LITRG for several years, and we continue to constructively challenge HMRC regarding their performance and channel shift decisions (such as the closure of telephone lines), while seeking to work with them on ways to improve customer service.

On 28 May, we had a 'bespoke' RBSG meeting, focusing solely on HMRC's channel shift, with a view to better understanding the reasons for telephone and webchat contact, so we can work with HMRC to develop alternatives to ensure taxpayers and agents can better self-serve.

At RBSG, we also discuss other significant topics such as Making Tax Digital, agent standards and the tax administration strategy, to name just a few. These typically have their own dedicated engagement forums, but periodic discussion at RBSG ensures that key points can be highlighted directly to senior HMRC staff.

Further information about the RBSG can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) at tinyurl.com/5n64mr6a, including 'meeting summaries' prepared by HMRC. Please be aware that because these are for public consumption, they are necessarily sanitised and do not fully reflect everything discussed during the meetings, or the extent of the debate and challenge put forward by the representative bodies.