

Single finance guidance body

Personal tax

01 April 2017

LITRG commented on the ongoing consultation on the government's proposal to form a single financial guidance body.

For the unrepresented individual, understanding and dealing with financial matters can be a minefield. Pensions, savings, taxation, state benefits and all of their interactions are incredibly complex.

For people to stand any chance of understanding these issues, guidance and information needs to be joined up. Currently, the government's provision of public financial guidance falls in various places. LITRG therefore welcomes the proposal to bring the Money Advice Service, Pensionwise and the Pensions Advisory Service together under a new, single body.

LITRG has been commenting on these changes as they develop, with a particular focus on how appropriate tax guidance will be included in the provision of financial guidance. It was therefore disquieting that in the latest consultation document (<http://tinyurl.com/gsqzy9l>), which quite rightly highlights the priorities of debt and pension guidance, the word tax did not appear once. Tax debt, alleged or actual, is a major area of debt problems, which can only be appropriately challenged or established by professional tax advisers. Likewise tax is an important part of pension savings and decumulation and here also professional advice can be crucial. Wider savings is another important field in which tax can have a big impact.

LITRG's response to the consultation highlighted that the new body could usefully offer a co-ordinating role in many areas. For example, the new body could play a part in financial education programmes within schools – not necessarily by delivering educational initiatives itself, but by co-ordinating relevant expertise to assist teachers in the classroom. Tax is one area where the body could play a part, as we know there are members of the profession who would be willing to go into schools to give a talk or help deliver a lesson (and indeed, many do arrange this for themselves) but for whom there is no co-ordinated means of volunteering to help.

Further, LITRG continues to raise concerns about over-reliance on digital delivery of information and services. The new public financial guidance body must concentrate on reaching out to the various groups of people who struggle to engage digitally.

LITRG's response to the consultation can be viewed on the [group's website](#).