HM Revenue & Customs

Briefing Note – November/December 2014
Digital Services for Agents

<u>**Agent Online Self Serve (AOSS)**</u>

In this latest update we're pleased to announce that our AOSS project has passed its first Government Digital Services (GDS) assessment. This involved a panel interview for the AOSS team and an assessment of the project against 26 service standards. We met GDS' requirements on all 26 counts. This success enables us to move into the next phase - the design and development of the first live service, which we'll trial (through what's known as a 'private beta' release) with a small number of agent users.

The next stage
During our initial user research agents told us that the ability to access the PAYE accounts of their employer clients was very important to them. That's why we are planning for an initial service that will enable agents, once they have confirmed and verified their employer client lists, to access their clients' PAYE accounts and view liabilities and payments.

Our first live (private beta) release will involve a small number of agents with whom we'll work closely to improve the service. We'll then gradually increase the scope and the number of users as we respond to feedback and make improvements. We'll also begin to add new features.

Volunteers please
If agents would like to help us with this work we'd very much like to hear from them. For the initial service in 2015 we will need agents who:

- Are based in the U.K;
- Have between 20 and 200 employer PAYE clients; and
- Hold Government Gateway administrator credentials on behalf of their firm. That means they are able to login on the Government Gateway and (if necessary) delegate access to others in the firm

Agents who would like to help and who meet these criteria should email diane.ross@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

If agents have already volunteered, either through their representative body or individually, they don't need to contact us again. We'll be going through our current

list of volunteers to identify anyone we think will be able to help us and we'll approach them directly.

We also plan to publish an advert and a questionnaire on the GOV.UK website to help us reach as many agents as possible who might be interested in getting involved.

Prototype - the first service
We hope to publish the prototype on GOV.UK so more agents can look at the screens we've designed so far. This won't be a live service but it will offer an opportunity to let us have views. We'll let you know when the prototype has been published and we hope that agents will let us know what they think. Obtaining feedback to improve the service at every stage is really important. The current AOSS design has been through several iterations and has already been improved thanks to user research and comments.

The prototype service has been demonstrated to some agents' representatives and to the larger professional services firms so that they can give us their early thoughts.

Third Party Software
We know that many agents use third party software products, which are able to exchange information with HMRC systems by using Application Programming Interfaces (API's) – sets of rules that developers use that define how a third party product can ask one of our systems to do something. We will be working with software providers on the production of API's to ensure compatibility with the new agents' service. We'll provide these API's to agents who develop their own in-house products too.

Discussions about the support third party software solutions might provide to AOSS started at a meeting of agents, software developers and HMRC in October. A further meeting is scheduled for February 2015 and we'll let you know how this work progresses.

Next steps
We'll continue with our user research and with designing and developing our first live (private beta) service. As we've said before we know that this will present us with some challenges. For example, we'll need to design a solution that works well where multiple agents are acting for the same client and we'll want to talk to some agents about that.

We have made good progress but we know that there is still much to do. We'll keep you posted through regular updates but do keep an eye on our Tax Agents' Blog where we plan to post more frequent progress reports.

<u>Moving HMRC guidance to GOV.UK</u>

We wanted to take this opportunity to also bring you up to date on our work to transition the HMRC website to GOV.UK. You've probably already spotted that we have now redirected the HMRC website homepage to GOV.UK. Anyone trying to access the HMRC homepage (e.g. through a bookmark) will automatically be redirected to the HMRC organisation page at www.gov.uk/hmrc. This includes both corporate information and links at the top of the page to all HMRC services and information, including the tax agents' pages.

Not all of the content on the HMRC website has moved to GOV.UK yet, but anything that hasn't, such as our manuals, will remain available on the HMRC website until we move it across - with links in place on GOV.UK from the relevant page.

Tax agents and advisers pages
Most of the tax agents and advisers specialist content has moved 'as is' so agents should still be able to easily find what they need. Any bookmarked pages will redirect to the relevant pages on GOV.UK. The material will, however, be presented differently, in the new GOV.UK format.

Latest news for agents
Following the move to GOV.UK the way you'll read HMRC's 'Latest news' (and access RSS feeds) changed.
Agents can get all the latest news and find out about changes to online guidance by signing up for the HMRC latest feed on GOV.UK. You can receive alerts by email or RSS feed.

As well as this, we've created a feed for tax agents and we're currently working through which GOV.UK content will be most relevant for this feed. This may take us a little time.

You can also find the latest news by choosing to sign up for our latest feeds on particular topics, including VAT, PAYE and Corporation Tax. Follow the links below, or go to our Services and information page and choose the topics you are interested in. The link to the latest feed can be found at the top right of each topic page.
Self assessment latest feed
PAYE for employers latest feed
VAT latest feed

Listening to feedback
We are working hard to ensure that the guidance on GOV.UK meets the needs of all of our customers and we really want to hear from agents with their suggestions as to how the guidance and tools can be improved. All pages on GOV.UK include a link, 'Is there anything wrong with this page?' (near the bottom of the page) for you to tell us if there's something that isn't working well for you, or, for example, if you've spotted a broken link. The GOV.UK feedback form can be found in the 'Contact' area of GOV.UK and is the best way to send more substantive comments.