

ICAEW TAX FACULTY REPRESENTATION

TAXREP 43/10

HMRC'S CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Results of a member survey by the ICAEW Tax Faculty into HMRC's service standards conducted between May and July 2010

Contents	Paragraph
Introduction	1 - 3
Who we are	4 - 6
Major points	7 – 13
Background	14 – 20
Specific comments	21 – 76
The Tax Faculty's Ten Tenets for a Better Tax System	Annex 1
Background to survey series	Annex 2
Extract from Hansard on HMRC telephone services	Annex 3
Further tables	Annex 4

INTRODUCTION

1. This TAXREP sets out the results of a short survey by the ICAEW Tax Faculty into HMRC's service standards.
2. This survey is the latest in a series which helps us to measure changes in HMRC's service standards. Our first survey was undertaken to provide evidence for representations made to the Treasury Committee in 2007. This was followed by a similar survey in 2009. This year's survey was live between May and July 2010.
3. Our Ten Tenets for a Better Tax System by which we benchmark proposals to change the tax system are summarised at Annex 1.

WHO WE ARE

4. The Institute operates under a Royal Charter, working in the public interest. Its regulation of its members, in particular its responsibilities in respect of auditors, is overseen by the Financial Reporting Council. As a world leading professional accountancy body, the Institute provides leadership and practical support to over 132,000 members in more than 160 countries, working with governments, regulators and industry in order to ensure the highest standards are maintained. The Institute is a founding member of the Global Accounting Alliance with over 775,000 members worldwide.
5. Our members provide financial knowledge and guidance based on the highest technical and ethical standards. They are trained to challenge people and organisations to think and act differently, to provide clarity and rigour, and so help create and sustain prosperity. The Institute ensures these skills are constantly developed, recognised and valued.
6. The Tax Faculty is the focus for tax within the Institute. It is responsible for technical tax submissions on behalf of the Institute as a whole and it also provides various tax services including the monthly newsletter 'TAXline' to more than 11,000 members of the Institute who pay an additional subscription, and a free weekly newswire.

MAJOR POINTS

7. Tax agents are acknowledged by HMRC as an essential part of the UK tax system. Our members, through their expertise and the multiplier effect (each member in practice acts for many individual client taxpayers), provide a valuable resource to assist tax compliance and tax gathering for a large proportion of UK taxpayers at no direct cost to government. It follows that given this vital role, they need to be able to communicate with HMRC easily, efficiently and reliably.
8. We are very concerned that overall service standards have fallen steadily as HMRC continues to seek to reduce its costs and improve its efficiency in line with the department's budget allocation. This trend seems to be continuing rather than abating. We continue to question whether HMRC can meet its aspiration to "provide an increasingly efficient and high quality service" while reducing staff numbers: the evidence from our survey and elsewhere reinforces our concerns.
9. Three particular areas that our survey highlighted upon which HMRC should concentrate resources to help improve overall service standards are:
 - better trained staff;
 - nominated staff having ownership of problems; and
 - e-mail access to HMRC.

10. The difficulty of communicating with HMRC stands out as one of the biggest problems for agents. It is difficult to get through on the telephone, the people answering the phones have insufficient knowledge to be able to resolve queries, promised call backs do not happen and letters remain unanswered.
11. We have asked our members each year how they would prefer to be able to communicate with HMRC given a choice between telephone, post, email and online. In this year's survey, e-mail is once again the most popular choice. This is not surprising given that in the past ten years it has become the standard way that businesses communicate with each other. In addition to speed and ease of use, it provides an audit trail and the ability for automatic acknowledgement by the recipient.
12. There have been discussions between HMRC and the professional bodies to explore using e-mail but there are still significant problems to overcome. We urge HMRC to speed up this project and make a start in e-mail communication as we believe it is essential step in effecting improvements in service standards. HMRC needs to make available e-mail tools such as structured email and to at least accept inbound e-mail as an alternative to post wherever possible. This has the potential to increase efficiency and save costs for agents, their clients and HMRC.
13. More generally, HMRC needs to make better use of technology. Improving HMRC's services to agents through further expansion of e-services was a key recommendation of National Audit Office Report 'Engaging with tax agents' which was published on 13 October 2010. We appreciate that this comes at a cost. HMRC has invested heavily in new IT in recent years and needs to continue to do so. HMRC is a revenue collecting Government Department and needs resources to develop modern means to do this efficiently. Well targeted investment in improved IT systems could produce substantial savings in the medium to longer term to support the ambitious budget reduction targets that HMRC has been set.

BACKGROUND

14. HMRC was created in 2005 following the merger of the former Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise departments. At that time, it pledged to provide a more efficient and higher quality service while reducing staff numbers.
15. The results of the reforms being undertaken by HMRC under the efficiency programme include:
 - moving away from a local structure to one based on much larger offices;
 - increased use of call centres; and
 - concentrating specialisations in particular locations.
16. There is widespread concern that as a direct consequence, services 'on the ground' are less efficient, resulting in considerable wasted time and costs for taxpayers, agents and HMRC.

2010 ICAEW member research into HMRC's service standards

17. Our 2010 survey took place in June 2010 and asked similar questions to those in our two earlier surveys to make comparisons more meaningful. Most of our respondents are sole practitioners or work in small firms. The survey was not undertaken with a statistically selected population, but we believe it provides a useful snapshot of our members' experiences and the messages coming through are broadly consistent with our earlier surveys.
18. For the purposes of this evidence we focussed on the following key issues:

- Telephone and post, including
 - Response time
 - Accuracy of HMRC processing
 - Technical knowledge of HMRC staff
- Key areas of practical concern raised repeatedly by our members.

19. We also asked our members what actions HMRC could implement to improve overall service standards.

20. This online survey was live between 18 May and 14 July 2010 and received 249 responses.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Dealing with HMRC by telephone

21. One of the biggest problems when trying to contact HMRC by telephone is the difficulty in getting through to speak to someone at HMRC.

22. On 13 January 2010, the National Audit Office published its report *HM Revenue and Customs: Handling telephone enquiries*. The report is available from http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0910/handling_telephone_enquiries.aspx.

23. It concludes that in 2008/09 HMRC's performance for answering telephone calls was well below HMRC's own targets and industry standards. In its Customer Contact Directorate, which answers 95% of calls to the Department's contact centres, only 57% of 103 million call attempts were answered, compared with 71% the previous year.

24. In a Parliamentary question on 11 October 2010, reported in Hansard, it seems that the situation has deteriorated further, with only 34% of calls to HMRC's centrally managed contact centres being answered during June 2010, see Annex 3.

Quality of response.

25. We are concerned not only with how long it takes to reach HMRC by telephone, but also with the quality of the response.

26. We asked respondents to consider the last ten times they had called HMRC with a telephone enquiry, asking how many times the query was resolved to their satisfaction within the first call.

27. In 2010, 71% (2009, 63%; 2007, 55%) of respondents reported in at least five of the last ten calls to HMRC, they needed to have further contact in order to resolve the enquiry, see Table 1 of Annex 4.

28. Our surveys show that since 2007 there has been a steady and marked decline in the quality of HMRC's telephone service. The need to make follow up phone calls is very inefficient and wastes large amounts of time, both for the agent and for HMRC. Further research would be useful into the types of enquiry which cause most problems.

Request for a straightforward data change

29. We also asked respondents to consider when of the last ten times they had telephoned HMRC with a request for a straightforward data change, for example amending a client's name or address, how many times the query was resolved to their satisfaction on the first call.

30. In 2010, 21% (2009, 30%; 2007, 27%) reported success on at least eight of the last ten occasions, see table 2 of Annex 4.
31. The 2010 survey shows an even lower success rate than the 2009 and 2007 surveys. Given that these statistics relate to simple data changes it is disappointing that there continue to be so many errors. We did not ask what specific changes caused the most problems, but believe it is likely that a large number of problems may have been at least partly linked to the new National Insurance and PAYE Service (NPS) launched in June 2009.

Agent Dedicated telephone lines

32. Agent Dedicated telephone lines (ADLs) replaced Agent Priority lines (APLs) between our 2009 and 2010 surveys. APLs simply gave priority to calls from agents who called HMRC call centres using specific telephone numbers. Access was still limited to the same call centres used by the general public.
33. The new ADLs are available only to agents and give access to more highly trained staff. The introduction of ADLs was a welcome development given the key role that tax agents play in making the tax system work and in providing a 'multiplier effect' for HMRC. These lines have been very well received by our members and compare very favourably with the telephone experience of having to call the general HMRC contact centres.
34. We asked respondents how long it took to get through to HMRC using these lines.

	2010	2009	2007
Less than 30 seconds	25%	25%	23%
30 seconds to 2 minutes	42%	37%	50%
More than 2 minutes	7%	11%	10%
Usually takes more than one attempt to connect	13%	9%	9%
Don't know	13%	18%	8%

35. There seems to have been little change in these response times. We think however that these lines are very useful and provide benefits both for agents and for HMRC and we recommend that further specialisation of HMRC staff on these lines should be explored.
36. According to a written parliamentary question (see Annex 3), only 32% (May 2010) and 34% (June 2010) of calls from the general public were being answered by HMRC at around the time of our survey. Based on our survey, agent's ability to contact HMRC by telephone was much better than the equivalent experience for the general public. In our view, HMRC needs to improve telephone access for the general public and bring its service standards more into line with those who use ADL lines, given that in 2010 even ADL were slightly below the industry benchmark – see paragraph 5 of the NAO report referred to in paragraph 22 above which states that the industry benchmark is 'more than 90%'.
37. It is clear from our survey that more complex queries are a particular problem for HMRC staff. We asked whether the technical knowledge of HMRC staff was sufficient to resolve the enquiry. 61% (2009, 50%; 2007, not asked) of respondents felt that the level of knowledge was rarely or never sufficient. The survey results clearly show a need for improved staff training. However, unfamiliarity with particular taxpayer cases coupled with a lack of staff continuity, inevitable where call centres are involved, are also probably to blame.

Dealing with HMRC by post

38. We asked respondents how long it took before an enquiry submitted by post received a full answer, treating VAT and other taxes separately.

Queries not involving VAT

39. Replies to queries, not involving VAT, took between one and three months in 53% of cases (2009, 59%; 2007, 50%). In 34% of cases, a full reply took longer than three months (2009, 21%; 2007, 20%).

Queries involving VAT

40. Only half of our respondents had an opinion on the speed of reply to queries involving VAT but overall these were resolved more quickly. Of those with an opinion, although in 2010 47% (2009, 49%) of replies took between one and three months. In only 7% of cases did a full reply take longer than three months (2009, 15%).
41. One possible reason for a better service standard for VAT is that many queries will be specific to VAT and so may be handled by specialist VAT trained staff.

Request for a straightforward data change

42. We asked respondents to consider the last ten times they had written to HMRC with a request for a straightforward data change such as amending a client's name or address, asking how many times the action was completed at the first request.
43. In 2010, 22% (2009, 24%; 2007, 36%) reported success on at least eight of the last ten occasions, see table 3 of Annex 4.
44. Post seems to be marginally more reliable than telephone for straightforward changes, although the service has deteriorated. Since post is far more labour intensive for both agent and HMRC, this is clearly an area for attention.
45. We asked respondents to give their opinions of the technical knowledge of HMRC staff who deal with letters.
46. In 2010, 36% (2009, 27%; 2007, not asked) of respondents felt that the level of knowledge of HMRC staff who deal with letters was rarely or never sufficient to resolve the enquiry efficiently. Again, although this may reflect in part the increased complexity of the tax system, the survey results show a need for improved staff training.

Notices of coding

47. We asked what proportion of PAYE coding notices were incorrect.

	2010	2009
Less than 10% of notices are incorrect	18%	27%
More than 10% but less than 25% of notices are incorrect	21%	31%
More than 25% but less than 50% of notices are incorrect	40%	25%
More than 50% of notices are incorrect	21%	17%

(Not asked in 2007)

48. Given the extensive reports in the national media of problems with the changeover to the new NPS computer in June 2009, it is unsurprising that overall these results were worse than last year. At the time of the survey, our members had just experienced four months of notices of coding which had been generated by the new system, many being based on incorrect data.
49. We would hope that these results should be much improved when we repeat this question next year.
50. It is very disappointing that the problems caused by the NPS were not anticipated by effective scenario planning and testing. The cost to agents, HMRC and the public has been considerable. We also note that in many cases HMRC already possessed the information which should have enabled a correct code to be issued at the outset. We asked our respondents what in their opinion was the proportion of cases which were wrong where HMRC already had the necessary information to issue a correct code.

	2010	2009
Less than 25%	8%	10%
More than 25% but less than 50%	12%	11%
More than 50% but less than 75%	20%	24%
More than 75%	60%	55%

51. This problem is exacerbated by processing delays which might be resolved if post was dealt with more quickly. HMRC needs systems in place to capture information more quickly.

Repayment processing

52. Taxpayers can claim a tax repayment by completing a self assessment tax return either on line or on paper or by using paper form R40. Only taxpayers within the self assessment system can submit a tax return. We wanted to establish how quickly taxpayers received repayments using each of these methods.
53. We note that there is still no option to submit an R40 return online, something we have advocated for the last four or five years. If service standards are to be improved and HMRC's costs reduced, it is essential that an electronic R40 is developed. The suggestion has been discussed with HMRC through the Working Together forum where it has been requested that its development should be given priority. We appreciate that in the current climate capital funding for the development of an R40 will be difficult but we would expect such an investment to be worthwhile in the medium to longer term by reducing HMRC's operating costs. We question why R40 cases cannot be dealt with through the self assessment system, simply using a known range of Unique Taxpayer Reference numbers.
54. When we asked this question in our survey, we also gave the options, varies/depends on time of year/don't know. We calculated the following results based only on those respondents who were able to estimate a response time.
55. Time to receive repayments following submission of hard copy tax return:

	2010	2009	2007
Less than 14 days	3%	6%	3%
14 days to 1 month	16%	16%	21%

More than 1 month but less than 3 months	44%	51%	57%
More than 3 months	37%	27%	19%

56. Time to receive repayments following submission of online tax return:

	2010	2009	2007
Less than 14 days	39%	57%	64%
14 days to 1 month	34%	32%	28%
More than 1 month but less than 3 months	22%	10%	6%
More than 3 months	5%	1%	2%

57. Time to receive repayments following submission of hard copy R40 return:

	2010	2009	2007
Less than 14 days	4%	2%	9%
14 days to 1 month	28%	44%	46%
More than 1 month but less than 3 months	56%	42%	40%
More than 3 months	12%	12%	5%

58. As you would expect online submissions elicited the fastest repayments since the process is largely automated.

59. Although it is not compulsory to file self assessment tax returns online, HMRC's online filing data shows a marked increase in the proportion of returns filed online as opposed to on paper in recent years. HMRC's statistics show the following trend.

Year of receipt and filed by 5 April of that year	Total returns received (online and paper)	Online returns received	Percentage of returns received filed online
2005/06	8,856,552	2,025,425	23%
2006/07	8,832,105	2,948,983	33%
2007/08	8,837,932	3,853,227	43%
2008/09	8,963,661	5,949,510	66%
2009/10	8,988,029	6,625,382	74%

Source: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/about/online-filing-figs.htm>

60. Clearly, in repayment cases, there is much to be said for filing a tax return online. This works unfairly for taxpayers who are not in the self assessment system, many of whom will have low incomes.

61. Earlier in 2010, the Tax Faculty received reports from members who were concerned that the speed of repayments from online submissions appeared to have slowed. On investigation, it became apparent that manual checks were being used by HMRC to verify some repayments before they were being issued.

62. This is supported by the results of our survey which shows a considerable drop in the very fast repayments, those within 14 days, which are those which are most likely to have been

made without human intervention. Most of these do seem to be cleared within three months.

VAT applications

63. The speed with which HMRC processes new VAT registrations can have a significant impact on the smooth running of the business concerned. From time to time there are delays which become particularly problematic. Some applications for registration are merely routine and we would expect the vast majority of these to be processed very quickly. Others are more complex and need to be checked more thoroughly, either because of the nature of the business itself or because the business will be making large repayment claims.

64. We asked respondents how long new VAT registrations had taken for routine applications made in the past six months:

	2010	2009
Up to 14 days	19%	21%
15 days to 1 month	41%	45%
More than 1 month but less than 3 months	36%	29%
More than 3 months	4%	5%

Note. This question was not included in 2007.

65. VAT registrations need to be processed as quickly as possible. We asked respondents how long new VAT registrations had taken for non routine applications made in the past six months:

	2010	2009
Up to 14 days	4%	2%
15 days to 1 month	28%	44%
More than 1 month but less than 3 months	56%	42%
More than 3 months	12%	12%

Note. This question was not included in 2007.

66. Overall, VAT applications seem to be taking slightly longer. The indications are that very simple VAT registrations are being processed just as quickly, but that others are taking longer than last year.

67. Once a business has exceeded the VAT registration threshold, it must notify HMRC of the liability within 30 days of the end of the month in which this happened. It becomes liable to start charging VAT from the start of the following month.

68. In practice this means that a business must issue invoices stating that a VAT registration has been applied for from the date when it must be registered, even though it cannot actually charge the VAT at that time. When the VAT registration is finally issued, there can be a considerable amount of additional invoicing for the VAT which is now chargeable on sales during the interim period. The longer a VAT registration takes to come through, the greater the administrative burden on these businesses, which by definition are likely to be new or growing.

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How HMRC could improve its service to agents

70. We are concerned that overall service standards have fallen steadily as HMRC seeks to reduce its costs and improve its efficiency in line with the department's budget allocation. We gave respondents a choice of possible actions which HMRC could implement to improve overall service standards, allowing them to choose only one from a given list. We used the same list in 2007 and 2009, which is made up of suggestions made by our members.

The three areas which received most votes were:

- better trained staff;
- nominated staff having ownership of problems; and
- e-mail access to HMRC.

71. It is interesting to note that the top two suggestions from our respondents are unchanged. Training is still regarded as the biggest issue, with nominated staff having ownership of problems a close second.
72. We are pleased to note that in relation to the second of these, the new role of Agent Account Managers (AAM) has been developed specifically to deal with problem cases. HMRC is in the process of allocating all agents an AAM. Their role is largely around communication, but agents will be able to take problem cases, where they are having trouble getting something done through normal channels, to their AAM. This new service is being rolled out as this survey report is being written. We welcome this initiative.
73. Providing e-mail access to HMRC is now a strong third contender. It was second choice in 2007, but fell temporarily in the poll in 2009, probably because at that time agents were reacting to problems with HMRC's online filing software and systems. Many of those are now resolved and the request for e-mail reflects the fact that e-mail has now become the standard means of business to business communication. In addition to speed and ease of use, it provides an audit trail and the ability for automatic acknowledgement by the recipient. .
74. The final question in our survey was open for general comments. The difficulty of communicating with HMRC stands out as one of the biggest problems for agents. It is difficult to get through on the telephone, the people answering the phones have insufficient knowledge to be able to resolve queries, promised call backs do not happen and letters remain unanswered.
75. There have been numerous discussions between HMRC and the professional bodies to explore using e-mail over the past decade, but with very little progress. We urge HMRC to speed up this project and make a start in e-mail communication as we believe it is essential step in effecting improvements in service standards. HMRC needs to make available e-mail tools such as structured e-mail and to at least accept inbound e-mail as an alternative to post wherever possible
76. More generally, HMRC needs to make better use of technology. Improving HMRC's services to agents through further expansion of e-services was a key recommendation of the National Audit Office Report *Engaging with tax agents* which was published on 13 October 2010. We appreciate that this comes at a cost. HMRC has invested heavily in new IT in recent years and this needs to continue in spite of the recent budget cuts announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review. HMRC is a revenue collecting Government Department and needs resources to develop modern means to do this efficiently.

Investment in improved IT systems should produce substantial savings in the medium to longer term that will support the ambitious budget reduction targets that HMRC has been set.

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ANNEX 1

THE TAX FACULTY'S TEN TENETS FOR A BETTER TAX SYSTEM

The tax system should be:

1. **Statutory:** tax legislation should be enacted by statute and subject to proper democratic scrutiny by Parliament.
2. **Certain:** in virtually all circumstances the application of the tax rules should be certain. It should not normally be necessary for anyone to resort to the courts in order to resolve how the rules operate in relation to his or her tax affairs.
3. **Simple:** the tax rules should aim to be simple, understandable and clear in their objectives.
4. **Easy to collect and to calculate:** a person's tax liability should be easy to calculate and straightforward and cheap to collect.
5. **Properly targeted:** when anti-avoidance legislation is passed, due regard should be had to maintaining the simplicity and certainty of the tax system by targeting it to close specific loopholes.
6. **Constant:** Changes to the underlying rules should be kept to a minimum. There should be a justifiable economic and/or social basis for any change to the tax rules and this justification should be made public and the underlying policy made clear.
7. **Subject to proper consultation:** other than in exceptional circumstances, the Government should allow adequate time for both the drafting of tax legislation and full consultation on it.
8. **Regularly reviewed:** the tax rules should be subject to a regular public review to determine their continuing relevance and whether their original justification has been realised. If a tax rule is no longer relevant, then it should be repealed.
9. **Fair and reasonable:** the revenue authorities have a duty to exercise their powers reasonably. There should be a right of appeal to an independent tribunal against all their decisions.
10. **Competitive:** tax rules and rates should be framed so as to encourage investment, capital and trade in and with the UK.

These are explained in more detail in our discussion document published in October 1999 as TAXGUIDE 4/99; see http://www.icaew.co.uk/taxfac/index.cfm?AUB=TB2I_43160,MNXI_43160

ANNEX 2

BACKGROUND TO SURVEY SERIES

HMRC's efficiency programme

The merger of the old Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise departments became law on 7 April 2005. Since then organisational changes have swept through the merged department.

In its autumn 2005 performance report HMRC stated its mission to provide an increasingly efficient and high quality service that

- *helps people and businesses understand and meet their tax obligations and understand and receive their entitlements*
- *strengthens frontier protection and*
- *tackles those who do not comply*

so we all contribute to the integrity and well-being of the UK.

HMRC undertook to achieve this while at the same time making serious reductions in the number of its employees. Full time (equivalent) staff numbers would come down from 98,337 to around 85,800 by 1 April 2008. Further reductions have followed.

Since 2008, the efficiency programme has resulted in HMRC's budget being cut by 5% a year in real terms. By the time of the Autumn 2009 autumn report, HMRC staff numbers had already been reduced to below 82,000, see <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/about/autumn-report-2009.pdf> and we understand that current staff numbers are expected to be around 70,000. The latest cuts announced in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review will reduce HMRC staff levels still further, to an estimated 60,000.

Throughout, we have had serious concerns about whether these cuts could be achieved without compromises in service levels. In particular, we are concerned that many of HMRC's best trained and most experienced staff have left.

Early in 2007, our members were reporting increasing problems with HMRC services. We noted these concerns in our written evidence to the 2007 inquiry by the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee. The committee referred to them in its report on the 2006 Pre-Budget Report. However, the concerns were referred to as anecdotal by the Treasury officials who gave evidence, as follows:

'The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales suggested to us that the efficiency programme in HM Revenue & Customs had led to a deterioration in the quality of service which HM Revenue & Customs provided to its customers. When we asked Treasury officials whether the risk of efficiency savings leading to lower quality services had materialised, we were told:

"The answer to that must be no, because the precautions we have taken have been to include measures of service quality as part of the assessment that is made when the Office of Government Commerce are assessing whether an efficiency saving has been made. So in order to know whether an efficiency saving has been made rather than a service cut been delivered, that will be clear."

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmtreasy/115/115.pdf>

We were disappointed by this response but recognised that in order to make a more compelling case to Government, we needed to provide better evidence and therefore undertook the 2007 survey. We conducted a further survey in 2009 (published as TAXREP 22/09) and now 2010, using broadly the same set of questions each year for comparisons.

ANNEX 3

Extract from Hansard, 11 October 2010 Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

Stephen Timms: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of telephone calls to HM Revenue and Customs were answered in each of the last 12 months. [14634]

Mr Gauke: The proportion of telephone calls to HMRC's centrally managed network of contact centres answered in each of the last 12 months, to June 2010, are shown in the following table.

<i>HMRC contact centre call attempts</i>				
	<i>Answered by advisers (percentage)</i>	<i>Handled by IVR⁽¹⁾ (percentage)</i>	<i>Handled (total percentage)</i>	<i>Call attempts (million)</i>
June 2010	34.3	7.3	41.6	12.8
May 2010	32.4	8.7	41.1	13.3
April 2010	38.8	7.5	46.3	11.2
March 2010	53.9	11.3	65.2	8.5
February 2010	72.5	9.6	82.1	5.8
January 2010	60.8	11.5	72.2	8.3
December 2009	80.2	12.4	92.6	3.8
November 2009	82.0	9.1	91.1	4.7
October 2009	77.1	11.4	88.5	5.6
September 2009	65.3	8.4	73.7	7.2
August 2009	64.9	7.9	72.8	6.3
July 2009	59.4	8.7	68.1	9.6
⁽¹⁾ IVR = Interactive voice response/automated messages on the telephone call steering menu.				

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101011/text/101011w0009.htm>

ANNEX 4

FURTHER TABLES

Table 1 Satisfaction with telephone enquires

Q In the last ten times you called HMRC with a telephone enquiry, on how many occasions was the query was resolved to your satisfaction within the first call?

	2010	2009	2007
Less than 2 occasions	43%	36%	29%
3 to 5 occasions	28%	27%	26%
6 to 7 occasions	18%	23%	24%
8 occasions or more	7%	10%	16%
Don't know	4%	4%	5%

Table 2 Amendments by telephone

Q In the last ten times you have telephoned HMRC with a request for a straightforward data change such as amending a client's name or address, on how many occasions was the query resolved to your satisfaction within the first call?

	2010	2009	2007
Less than 2 occasions	21%	17%	17%
3 to 5 occasions	16%	15%	14%
6 to 7 occasions	13%	12%	19%
8 occasions or more	21%	30%	27%
Don't know	29%	26%	23%

Table 3 Amendments by letter

Q On the last ten times you have written to HMRC with a request for a straightforward data change such as amending a client's name or address, on how many occasions was the change effected to your satisfaction at the first request?

	2010	2009	2007
Less than 2 occasions	14%	14%	8%
3 to 5 occasions	17%	16%	10%
6 to 7 occasions	16%	19%	19%
8 occasions or more	22%	24%	36%
Don't know	31%	27%	27%

Table 4 What should HMRC do to improve its service?

Q Which from a list of possible actions HMRC could implement would have the greatest positive impact on your personal experience of dealing with HMRC?

	2010 percentage		2009 percentage
Better trained staff	23.6	Better trained staff	24.7
Nominated staff having ownership of problems	19.2	Nominated staff having ownership of problems	16.5
E-mail access to HMRC	13.6	Improved electronic systems and support	12.8
Improved telephone support	9.2	More local staff	9.2
Agent/client relationship managers	7.2	E-mail access to HMRC	9.2
Better response times	7.2	Better response times	8.3
More local staff	6.0	More accurate processing	7.3
Improved electronic systems and support	5.6	Agent/client relationship managers	6.4
Technical enquiry line	4.4	Improved telephone support	2.8
More accurate processing	4.0	Technical enquiry line	2.8

	2007 percentage
Better trained staff	17.0
E-mail access to HMRC	16.0
Nominated staff having ownership of problems	15
Agent/client relationship managers	10
Technical enquiry line	10
More local staff	9.0
Better response times	9.0
Improved telephone support	6.0
More accurate processing	5.0
Improved electronic systems and support	3.0