

The Professional Standards Committee (The Committee) met on 15 July 2021.

Internal Trust

The Committee discussed work on building trust within HMRC, with a particular focus on HMRC's 'Great place to work' programme and how it compares and contrasts to the external example presented at the April 2021 meeting. HMRC's People and Organisation Development team presented a paper centred around 4 comparative themes that aligned with the key areas identified in April's presentation: (1) how people are connected to their work, (2) leading and managing change, (3) respect at work, and (4) my manager. To help improve the customer and employee experience, the Committee were keen to look further into how training was utilised systematically in an organisation of comparable size and structure.

The Committee discussed the HMRC people survey results, particularly the low scores around pay and benefits, acknowledging that the recent reforms may go some-way to address this. They acknowledged improvements in scores during the COVID-19 period and discussed how to maintain these gains, as well as harnessing the opportunities that will come out of the transformation in the way employees work post-COVID-19 and return to the office. It was recommended that learning from the way our people worked during COVID-19 should be explicitly considered going forwards. The Committee discussed the potential benefits of the introduction of targets for staff engagement levels and made the recommendation that this should be something to be considered during the next stages of work in this area.

Reputation Management

The External Communications team gave a presentation to the Committee considering external perceptions of HMRC, the challenges ahead and the communications strategy moving forwards. The discussion focused on measures and actions HMRC can take to improve the external perception of the Department *through communicating more targeted and timely messages about the good work we are doing that many may not know about*, by communicating the importance of its purpose and overall function, as well as examining how HMRC's customer interaction and experience could be further improved.

The Committee discussed the impact of positive messages and how to learn from the improvement in perception of the department gained through the exceptional role it had to perform over the course of the pandemic and the different strategies employed to communicate the good work we did and are doing. It was recommended that HMRC be more explicit in its positive messaging, exploring further how and where this could be done. Further discussion focused on promoting the overall purpose of the Committee.

Trust Roadmap

The Committee discussed the proposal and plan for the development of a trust roadmap, *to set out the steps HMRC needs to take to build trust and help PSC to prioritise its work and focus effectively* (as recommended in April's meeting).

The aim of the session was to seek steers on; the approach to delivering a trust framework as an essential step towards a full roadmap, how to balance managing the complexity of trust with providing simple, clear messages to which everyone can relate, the key considerations to get cross departmental support to deliver this work collectively and views on how to prepare and support colleagues to have open and honest conversations when they are needed.

The Committee's discussion around this item focused on HMRC's Strategic Objective 3 "maintain taxpayers' consent through fair treatment and protect society from harm" and how to better understand 'harm' in the context of HMRC's work. It was noted that trust in HMRC exists in 'pockets' - while many customers had trust in the individual staff member they were dealing with, they may lack trust in the institution as a whole. The Committee recommended that HMRC continue to break down the problem statement that the roadmap supports, focusing on how this will support a collective departmental approach.