

Sustainability

Environmental impact

With a large estate covering Great Britain and Northern Ireland, HMRC is one of the largest government departments, making a significant contribution to sustainable operations and the government's environmental commitments.

We are on course to achieve the 2015 Greening Government targets by cutting greenhouse gas emissions from our buildings and business travel, reducing the amount of waste we generate, cutting water usage and ensuring sustainable procurement. Our performance in 2011-12 against the Greening Government targets and transparency commitments is included in our first Sustainability Report, which was published as part of HMRC's Annual Report and Accounts for 2011-12.

In 2011, we were awarded a Business in the Community 'Big Tick' in recognition of our approach to sustainable business travel. For the last three years, we have picked up the 'Fleet Hero Award' for the Best Large Public Sector Fleet. We have also been finalists in the 2011 and 2012 Climate Week Awards, 'Best Initiative by a Governmental or Statutory Body' category - for making environmental targets a priority and for our 'closed loop' paper recycling scheme.

As paper is our biggest tangible output, we have sought to make huge savings in the quantity of printed material we send to our customers by promoting on-line filing of tax returns and improving our internet presence.

Through our administration of environmental taxes, on behalf of government, we are encouraging businesses and individuals to reduce their carbon emissions, cut waste and protect the environment.

Supporting communities

Our aim is to make a positive contribution in the many communities throughout the UK in which we are based by:

- encouraging our people to undertake voluntary work, to share and develop their skills and gain a better understanding of our customers' needs
- giving our people the opportunity to support a range of charitable causes that are important to them, helping the wider community and staff engagement.

In 2011–12, we exceeded our volunteering target by giving more than 5,000 days to community activity and we have a similar level of commitment planned each year until 2015. We are also the first public sector organisation to be made a Gold Patron of The Prince's Trust, in recognition of the support we have given over the past 19 years to young people who are long-term unemployed or setting up in business.

HMRC people support a range of charities, both locally and nationally, and raised £883,291 in 2011–12 for our three centrally supported charities: The Charity for Civil Servants, BBC Children in Need, and the Civil Service Lifeboat Fund. In 2011-12 we were awarded the Payroll Giving Gold Quality Mark for the fifth year running in recognition of the 8,669 staff who donated a total of £872,825 to good causes from their wages.

Understanding our customers and their needs

The work we do in HMRC touches the lives of almost every adult and business in the UK. From students and single mothers to the largest multi-national corporations, almost everyone comes into contact with us at some point. This makes customer service central to everything we do.

At the end of 2009, and following an extensive consultation exercise with our customers, we published a Charter setting out our commitment to improve how we work with our customers and how they should deal with us. The Charter was developed to make sure that we apply the same standards and behaviours across all our business areas, and to all our customers.

In 2011, we launched our Operational Delivery profession to support the 60 per cent of HMRC staff who work in customer-facing roles, embedding Charter standards into the way they do their work.

We have focused on developing our customer understanding so that we can target resources in the areas of greatest customer need and risk. Our face-to-face services have been concentrated on those customers who need help the most, and we've

backed this up with additional assistance through funding and working with voluntary sector organisations.

We take time to engage with our customers, ensuring early and effective consultation on future plans and providing feedback on outcomes. We have also worked hard to improve our contact centre performance, with results showing a marked improvement: we handled 74 per cent of all calls in 2011-12 compared with 49 per cent the year before.

We recognise that this is still not good enough, so our aim is to reach the industry standard of answering 90 per cent of calls first time in March 2013, and then to maintain that level on average in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Supporting and developing our people

Our challenge is to continue to improve our performance despite a difficult economic climate. To do this, we're investing in developing strong leadership to build an engaged workforce – people who are motivated to go that extra mile to achieve good customer service.

We have also placed a renewed emphasis on professional, technical and business skills. Our new Operational Delivery Profession will help us to achieve industry standards for excellent customer service – and our new Tax Academy is raising professional standards. We're also investing in the development of people in the many other professions within HMRC, including economists, accountants, policy makers, lawyers, statisticians, procurement professionals, investigation officers and communications professionals – just some of the people who make up our diverse workforce.

The well-being of our people is very important to us. We have taken significant steps to support them and their managers with advice on preventing and protecting against ill health and making our workplaces safer. We also offer a wide range of flexible working patterns and arrangements, including term-time working, to help staff to balance their working day with home and family commitments.

More than 5,000 of our staff are 60 years of age or older and more than a fifth of our workforce have been with us for at least 30 years. We value the knowledge and experience that these people bring to the workplace.

One of our strengths lies in the diversity of our workforce and the way that helps us to understand our customers and respond to their needs. We have 11 very active diversity networks offering our people the opportunity to share experiences, support each other and comment on new initiatives.

We encourage people from under-represented groups to compete effectively for promotions and challenging developmental roles, and we have set representation targets for the employment of people from black and minority ethnic communities, women and disabled staff. These targets are stretching but achievable and progress is being made.