

HMRC External Research Programme 2016 to 2017

Reference	Title	Brief description
Digital Services		
16-17.CDIO.01	Digital user testing	This research involves recruiting a diverse range of customers from across the UK to test digital services. User research is a vital part of how HMRC is designing and building new digital services. It allows HMRC to continually test iterations of our digital services to continually refine and improve what we build, making sure that services meet the needs of customers and are easy to use.
16-17.CDIO.02	Digital accessibility testing	To ensure that the new digital services HMRC are building meet the necessary industry accessibility standards, HMRC carries out research and testing with users who have specific disabilities, particularly those who use assisted technologies to access digital services. This will check whether our services work with the different assisted technologies and whether the way the information is experienced affects comprehension for users with a range of disabilities, so that customers accessing digital services in this way receive the same customer experience as other customers.
Making Tax Digital		
16-17.BT.01	Quantifying small business engagement with Making Tax Digital	This project aims to segment the small business population based on attitudes, behaviours and capabilities that will influence businesses likely level of engagement with Making Tax Digital. The research will support HMRC's understanding of how to address those issues in Making Tax Digital design and engagement activity.
16-17.BT.28	Exploring the experience of taxpayers using the Making Tax Digital Income Tax self-assessment private and public beta	Quantitative and qualitative research with early adopters of the Making Tax Digital for Businesses software. The project aims to understand customers' experience of using software as part of their tax reporting activity.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.BT.29	Testing options for supporting small business transition including assisted digital to Making Tax Digital for business	Qualitative research with small business customers to better understand which HMRC support approaches are most effective for engaging with different types of businesses. Findings will be used to build on our existing understanding of small business customers, helping HMRC to improve the customer experience of businesses transitioning to Making Tax Digital.
16-17.BT.26	Exploring design and policy decisions in relation to complex businesses in Making Tax Digital	This qualitative research with a sample of more complex businesses will help to develop HMRC's understanding of the factors that need consideration for transitioning complex businesses to Making Tax Digital.
16-17.BT.23	Understanding customer journeys of those using the Business Tax Account and third party software	This qualitative research aims to provide HMRC with a better understanding of how businesses anticipate interacting with HMRC when Making Tax Digital is launched. It will explore the use of both the Business Tax Account for reviewing HMRC data and third party software for entering information.
16-17.BT.24	Exploring agents' views on Making Tax Digital and the Single Financial Account	This qualitative research with agents aims to explore their views on Making Tax Digital.
16-17.BT.27	Exploring business reporting cross tax and Corporation Tax errors to support upstream compliance	The aim of this qualitative research is to develop HMRC's understanding of the reasons common errors are made by business customers and inform the design of nudges and prompts embedded in third party software. This builds on earlier research carried out in Summer 2016, which explored underlying reasons for common Income Tax self-assessment errors.

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16-17.PT.07	Transition of international secondees in the UK to Personal Tax Account	By 2020, it is HMRC's intention that all businesses and individual tax payers will be able to register, file, pay, and update their information using the Personal Tax Account. International Secondees are likely to meet some barriers in moving to Personal Tax Accounts. This qualitative research will involve secondees, employers and agents to explore how to best move International Secondees working in the UK onto the Personal Tax Account, and to identify any potential barriers and possible solutions.
16-17.PT.17	Refreshing Pay As You Earn as part of Making Tax Digital for Individuals	Whereas overpayments or underpayments of tax are currently made at the end of the financial year, HMRC hopes to use in-year Real Time Information (RTI) to make dynamic adjustments to tax payments so that the majority of individuals end the year balanced. This project will use a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology to inform the introduction of this system, and to ensure new functionalities in the Personal Tax Account provide accessible information for customers to understand any changes in their liabilities.
Tax-Free Childcare		
15-16.BC.12	Tax-Free Childcare parent survey	A quantitative study with Tax-Free Childcare eligible parents in order to support the launch of Tax-Free Childcare, ensuring customers enjoy the best possible experience of account sign up and operation. Findings will add to our knowledge base of what the Tax-Free Childcare eligible population looks like, what the pattern for demand of Tax-Free Childcare will be like when it goes live in 2017, and what support HMRC is likely to need to provide in order to assist customers in signing up and maintaining their accounts moving forward on Tax-Free Childcare's digital by default platform.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.BC.08	Tax-Free Childcare: Childcare Provider sign up motivations and behaviour	Qualitative research with a range of childcare providers to provide insight into their decision making in relation to early decisions to sign-up to Tax-Free Childcare. This will explore their awareness and understanding of Tax-Free Childcare, their decision making process around sign up, and identify reasons why they have or have not taken action. This will help identify potential levers where action could be focused to encourage childcare providers to sign up to Tax-Free Childcare.
16-17.BC.09	Tax-Free Childcare service trial: recruitment and evaluation	This project will firstly offer parents the opportunity to register and take part in the childcare service trial, through which they will be able to receive Tax-Free Childcare. Trial participants will later be selected and invited to take part in follow up qualitative research to explore their experiences and to identify whether improvements to systems, processes or guidance may be needed before (and during) the national launch from early 2017. This research will deliver insights around customers' experience, behaviours and attitudes to help ensure the system can meet the demands and needs of the mass rollout to parents.
16-17.BC.10	Baseline survey of childcare providers to establish trends in the UK childcare market	Quantitative research with UK childcare providers to identify and monitor childcare market trends before and after the introduction of Tax-Free Childcare. Monitoring trends in key childcare market metrics (e.g. price, profitability) at the time and after the introduction of the policies will provide valuable contextual information for understanding responses to the introduction of Tax-Free Childcare and other government policies being introduced in 2017. This research study involves an initial feasibility study, and if proven feasible will involve primary data collection in 2017 to establish a baseline.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.BC.11	Tax-Free Childcare service: parents and childcare provider customer experience	Working parents will be able to apply for Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare through a single, joint digital application (the childcare service) delivered by HMRC. This will be a mixed-mode (quantitative and qualitative) research study with parents and childcare providers to provide insights into the whole customer experience of using the childcare service. Survey results will form a key part of the emerging evidence base for this new service, providing insights into customer perceptions of areas of strength / for further development, broad attitudes towards compliance (for Tax-Free Childcare), and drivers of satisfaction. This information will be used to help evaluate the service as well as identify touch-points that are priorities for improvement.
16-17.BC.14	Tax-Free Childcare service: parent and childcare provider take-up research	Qualitative research with childcare providers and parents. This will help HMRC to understand what triggers these customers to use the childcare service, as well as importantly what the barriers to use are. This will help support future communications campaigns to ensure that these are appropriately designed to maximise take-up and usage of the childcare service.
15-16.BC.15	Tax-Free Childcare awareness tracker	A quantitative tracking study of parents conducted as part of a wider omnibus study. This seeks to monitor awareness of the scheme, eligibility criteria, and intention to apply and by what means respondents might seek out further information on the scheme. This will allow HMRC to track and measure the awareness of Tax-Free Childcare whilst also helping to direct marketing communications to the most appropriate media or groups.
Customer experience		
14-15.CTS.07	HMRC Customer Experience survey 2015-18	The Mass Market Customer Survey allows HMRC to monitor customer experience and perceptions of dealing with HMRC. Covering tax agents, small businesses and individuals, the survey provides robust data on HMRC's performance against a number of key customer experience measures and allow HMRC to track changes over time.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.CTS.03	Qualitative research to understand customer experience of the acceptability of the time taken to reach end results	This qualitative research provides a deeper understanding of which aspects of customer experience are causing people to rate HMRC poorly on the 'Acceptability of time taken to reach an end result' dimension within the Mass Market Customer Survey. In-depth interviews were carried out with individuals, agents and small businesses. By exploring the customer's journey we can identify those products, processes and services where customers perceive an improvement is needed in the time HMRC takes to reach an end result.
14-15.BT.27	Large Business Panel Survey of customer experience 2015-18	The large business survey enables HMRC to maintain in-depth knowledge of how the department's relationship with large businesses changes over time and these customers' experiences of dealing with HMRC. It assesses the impact of changes and initiatives and help identify areas of potential service improvements. The survey will also increase HMRC's understanding of the effects of the administration of tax policy on large business behaviour.
14-15.BT.28	Mid-sized Business customer experience survey 2015-18	This survey monitors the experience of mid-size business customers and their experiences of dealing with HMRC. The survey tracks change in the experience of mid-size business customers over time, assesses the impact of new initiatives and gauges their overall perceptions of HMRC. The survey will help HMRC identify where future improvements could be made to the services offered to mid-sized business customers.
16-17.BT.31	Understanding the growth journey of the 'upper end' of small business and mid-sized business	This research investigates the needs of small businesses that have been trading for 3-5 years and who have grown to a point where they could transition to mid-sized business; and the needs of mid-sized businesses as they become larger and potentially more complex organisations. It will enable HMRC to identify where these businesses currently seek support and also what additional support they need at key life events, such as taking on additional employees, increasing turnover, undertaking research and development and starting to trade internationally.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.BT.22	Evaluating HMRC's work with English Growth Hubs and its effectiveness in supporting business growth	This qualitative research will assess the success of HMRC activity with Growth Hubs in terms of what has worked well and what could be improved in future iterations, identifying any impacts. This research will also help develop understanding of how effectively HMRC can support business growth by using a combination of its education, data and capacity building strength.
16-17.PT.13	Customer experience of Intelligent Telephony Automation	This qualitative research provides HMRC with an understanding of customer experience of automated messages used on the telephone helplines. In-depth interviews will be carried out with customers who have hung up after hearing an automated message. By exploring customers' experiences of automated messages, we can identify if these customers can be classed as having their call satisfactorily handled, can assess whether channel shift strategies employed by automated messages are successful, and can identify areas where improvements are needed on the automated messages system.
16-17.BC.02	Experiences and behaviours of dissatisfied tax credits customers	This research will contribute to our understanding of the experiences and behaviours of tax credits customers who have been through a complaint, reconsideration or appeals process. The findings will enable HMRC to better understand their customers and improve, design and implement targeted solutions in the future.
16-17.BC.05	The transition from tax credits to Universal Credit	This is a qualitative and quantitative research programme to cover tax credit customer experiences of the transition from tax credits to Universal Credit including experiences of the transfer of tax credit overpayments. The findings will be used to inform future improvements to the transition.
16-17.BC.06	Child Benefit survey	A quantitative survey with Child Benefit customers to provide better understanding of customers' experience, understanding of responsibilities and digital service needs within Child Benefit. The findings will assist HMRC with developing future service designs.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.BC.13	Universal Credit - concept testing the migration of tax credits customers to Universal Credit	This qualitative research with tax credits customers will explore responses to potential high level Universal Credit migration journeys, considering tax credit customers reactions to the potential journeys, their understanding of what they may need to do and the consequences of inaction. The findings will be used to inform our understanding of how the transition can be made easier for customers.
16-17.CC.6	Insight into the drivers of public perceptions of HMRC and the wider tax system	This qualitative research examines public perceptions of HMRC and the wider tax system, and how communications from HMRC might impact on taxpayer behaviour. The findings will inform a range of HMRC communications activity.
Compliance related		
16-17.EC.05	Self-Assessment online trigger prompts	The research will involve interviews with customers who have completed a Self-Assessment online return containing trigger prompts (i.e. on-line messages/links to guidance). It will explore customers' experiences, attitudes and perceptions of the trigger prompts, enabling HMRC to identify areas where improvements can be made.
16-17.EC.03	Understanding the evolving role of advisers and agents in the avoidance marketplace	The research will involve interviews with various agents and advisers in the avoidance marketplace to examine their past and current operating structures and behaviours. This qualitative study will add to the evidence base on the avoidance supply chain.
1617.EC.09	Understanding customers with offshore assets / accounts and what drives them to bring their tax affairs up to date	Qualitative research to further develop our understanding of customers who have money or other assets abroad and their motivational drivers in how they organise their tax affairs.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.EC.12	Understanding avoidance scheme users' decision making, customer experience and future compliance intentions when settling their enquiry with HMRC	Qualitative research to explore the decision making process, customer experience and future compliance intentions of avoidance scheme users, both during and after they've settled their enquiry with HMRC. A fuller understanding of this will support our Promote, Prevent and Respond Compliance Strategy and help improve customer service.
16-17.EC.11	Understanding the attitudes and behaviours of digital tech businesses towards tax requirements - and how HMRC can support their growth	Qualitative research will be undertaken with small and mid-size digital tech businesses in order to learn about their approach to meeting their tax requirements and claiming allowances. It will also enable us to better understand their growth journeys, the barriers they may face, and the types of support they turn to. The findings will inform the development of policies to support these businesses both in terms of growth and achieving compliance.
Improving information		
16-17.BT.16	Monitoring the tobacco and alcohol tax gap 2016/17	This research will provide up-to-date figures on tobacco consumption as well as alcohol and tobacco brought into the UK. The research will support HMRC's alcohol and tobacco strategy, in particular in terms of measuring progress in tackling organised crime and tackling tobacco fraud. The research also forms the basis of the tax gap estimates in this area. This long-running work provides HMRC with independent figures that are comparable over time to assess HMRC's long-term aim of narrowing the tax gap.
16-17.BT.07	Prevalence of individuals shopping online for goods from overseas and handling of Value Added Tax	This research will combine quantitative interviews with consumers to better understand the prevalence of online shopping, and qualitative interviews to explore understanding of payment of VAT for online purchases. This will inform HMRC's understanding of underpayment of VAT for online purchases, in parallel with the Consultation process for the tax measures announced at Budget 2016.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.BT.10	Partial Exemption	This research will provide updated figures relating to Value Added Tax (VAT) partial exemption and explore experience and usage of partial exemption among businesses. Understanding wider behaviours and levels of understanding of partial exemption will allow HMRC to understand how it is being applied and any areas for improvement or targeted intervention.
16-17.BT.11	Trade information of Value Added Tax unregistered businesses	This research will provide insight into both the proportion of business to consumer sales and the level of import and export trade among unregistered businesses.
14-15.PT.75	Wealth & Assets Survey	The Wealth and Assets Survey is a cross governmental, longitudinal survey delivered by the Office of National Statistics, of which HMRC is one of the funding organisations. It collects information about the economic wellbeing of households and individuals including their assets and debts, pension provision, how wealth is distributed and factors that may affect financial planning.
16-17.PT.09	The Sharing Economy: understanding user characteristics and tax reporting behaviours	The Sharing Economy is a rapidly growing sector in the UK. This involves opportunities, both for the economy as a whole and those who take part in the Sharing Economy. At the same time there could be an impact on revenue raised, while new policies and services for customers might need to be developed in line with contextual changes. This qualitative and quantitative research will help understanding the extent and size of the sharing economy, both in terms of income generated by, and the number and characteristics of, those who participate for profit ('Providers'), as well as their knowledge, attitude, and decision-making processes in relation to taxation of income generated in the Sharing Economy.

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16-17.PT.02	Research to explore the use of trusts and how tax planning drives customer behaviour	Qualitative research with agents and trust settlors to understand motivations and use of trusts. This will provide a greater understanding of the motivators for setting up both UK-based and offshore trusts, to scope the likely impacts of policy changes in this area. As well as policy, this research will inform the direction and design of HMRC communications, and interventions in the area of trusts.
16-17.PT.03	Leaving and inheriting estate assets: behavioural evidence around Inheritance Tax	Qualitative research with testators, agents and beneficiaries. It will explore how testators manage their estates and arrange tax affairs, and whether inheritance tax reliefs motivate the types of assets that are purchased prior to death. It will also explore what beneficiaries do with these assets once inherited, and why. This will help HMRC to understand the influence that these reliefs may have upon what assets are purchased, inheritance tax planning and what assets are passed on to beneficiaries upon the testator's death.
16-17.PT.04	Capital Gains Tax - Entrepreneurs' Relief: claimants' behaviours and motivations	Quantitative follow-up from 2015 qualitative research with individuals and agents to provide HMRC with quantifiable data on the how businesses decide to use Entrepreneurs' Relief (ER) and what motivates them to do so. The research will involve ER claimants as well as entrepreneurs who have disposed of, or own, qualifying assets but have not yet claimed ER, to understand the influence of the relief in driving business decisions. This will help understand how well policy is meeting its objectives and inform policy development.
16-17.PT.05	Understanding employment intermediaries' response to the new reporting requirement: a quantitative study	HMRC introduced a new reporting requirement in April 2015. Under this requirement, qualifying employment Intermediaries must now return the details of all workers supplied to an end-client where they do not operate Pay As You Earn on the workers' payment. This quantitative study will help HMRC to quantify awareness, understanding, and reasons for complying or not complying with the requirement, the effects of penalties on behaviours and how to best support intermediaries in meeting the requirements.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.PT.08	Employment status - understanding the barriers in determining employment status for Small and Medium Enterprises	Employment status (i.e. whether an individual is an employee, subject to Pay As You Earn rules, or Self-Employed) is important to HMRC as an individual's employment status will determine whether income is taxed correctly and that the correct class of National Insurance Contribution is paid. HMRC currently provides guidance to employers on employment status in the form of an online tool – the employment status indicator. This quantitative and qualitative study will provide evidence of the extent to which Small and Medium Enterprises experience difficulties in determining employment status and the types of barriers faced, and how HMRC can support them in this process.
16-17.BT.14	Understanding small producers and importers of sugar-sweetened beverages	This qualitative research explores the range of small producers and importers of sugar-sweetened beverages, providing insights into their characteristics and operations. The Chancellor recently outlined a new industry levy on soft drinks with added sugar; this study may be used to inform legislation surrounding the levy, including the development of a threshold, relief or exemption for the smallest producers and importers.
15-16.BT.10	Video Games Tax Relief evaluation	This qualitative research will evidence the impact that the Video Games Tax Relief has had on the industry since its introduction, particularly focusing on the impact on the production of culturally relevant video games. It will provide evidence of any continued need for this targeted incentive within the UK in order to support further growth.
Communications		
16-17.CC.01	HMRC Annual stakeholder survey 2016	This research allows HMRC to better understand the drivers behind our reputation with our stakeholders. It will enable HMRC to gauge/track stakeholders' perceptions, explore the rationales behind these perceptions, and to understand stakeholders' issues, behaviours and attitudes to better inform our future engagement work.

Reference	Title	Brief description
16-17.CC.02	A variety of paid-for marketing research projects	Regular annual tracker to evaluate the Self-Assessment advertising, Tax Credits Renewal and other campaigns.