

Closing 281 tax advice centres is another sign of the f...

Published: January 14, 2026, 7:04 am

The [Guardian has reported this morning](#) that:

HM Revenue and Customs is shutting all of its 281 inquiry centres, which provide face-to-face help on tax, and replacing them with a mobile service which will see advisers making "home visits" and even meeting people in coffee shops.

The decision will save HMRC £13m a year but has prompted a warning that "some very vulnerable people" would lose out. The move affects 1,300 staff around the country, though the Revenue said it would do everything possible to redeploy employees.

This is shocking for a number of reasons.

The first is that, as is widely known, UK tax law is complex. HMRC have a duty to help people. This move to save money in the supply of that help is a retrograde step.

Second, closing these centres means that HMRC will be seen to be retreating from our communities. That is dangerous: tax is a key part in the relationship between citizen and state and it has to be seen to be operated by and in the communities in which they live. This is part of the process of destroying that link which breaks part of the relationship of trust between HMRC and the community.

Third, it is wholly inappropriate to meet in coffee shops. Where is the taxpayer confidentiality in that?

Fourth, it is very often appropriate to meet in people's houses. It is intimidating for people to meet HMRC. If they are in your home it is very hard to ask for time to answer questions, or to find information. But there are often good reasons why people do need time to answer questions, and they make mistakes under pressure. This would all too readily occur if HMRC were in a person's home, asked questions and the person in a panic gave a wrong answer to try to get HMRC out, which then proved costly. I think this offer is not appropriate: it shifts the balance of power the wrong way: I want tax paid but taxpayers also have rights to make sure they can provide the right answers without pressure and that's hard in your own home.

Fifth, what are the people who will be sacked by HMRC do?

Sixth, why is that HMRC can provide customer relationship managers for big business but not even provide customer advice in a tax office for the rest of us?

This is yet another sign of the utterly failed management logic of HMRC that nothing but sweeping changes from the top down can change.