

Ipsos MORI



HMRC Reporting Births Project

Claimants' experiences and views of aligning Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit notification processes for births and their wider views on alignment and data sharing

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Research Report 79

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Summary

The following findings come from a qualitative study of 50 Child Benefit (ChB) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) claimants who called either one or both of the ChB and/or CTC helplines in September 2007 to notify HMRC of their child's birth. Half the claimants went through a pilot aligned process where they only had to make one call to either helpline to request an application form for both benefits¹; the other half went through the standard non-aligned process (the control process) which involved calling both helplines separately.

There was strong support for the pilot process, amongst pilot and control claimants. Participants felt the alignment of the process of requesting application forms was more efficient for HMRC, and also offered cost and time savings for claimants. It could also alert those unaware of CTC that they were entitled to this benefit. Although the pilot process was on the whole the preferred option, it was felt that the control process was not that different, or more difficult.

Participants were positive about the service they received from the helpline, with staff regarded as helpful, professional and informative. There were some issues about the length of time a call can take and the related costs.

Data sharing² between the ChB and CTC teams was regarded as a way to ease the burden on the parent. Some concern was raised (when prompted) that data might not always be passed on correctly or promptly but this was not widespread. 'Tell us Once'³ tended to be welcomed if data was being shared with other government departments, as long as it was done securely and on a 'need to know' basis. Participants were less keen about data being passed outside government, with concerns about the potential loss of data and how the data would be used.

¹ Existing CTC claimants were not required to complete another application for CTC; they could update their details over the telephone (although parents were not always aware of this until they made the call to the helpline). They were still required to complete a separate ChB application form for their new baby.

² As occurred in the pilot process, when one helpline advisor updated both the ChB and CTC systems with the information claimants provided about the new baby.

³ The report *Service transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer* set out the steps the Government could take to lift its service performance substantially when interacting with citizens and businesses. It recommended setting up a service that would allow citizens to inform Government once of changes in circumstances such as bereavement, birth and change of address. The 'Tell Us Once' programme is a cross-government initiative set up to determine whether the recommendations are viable and will add value.

Executive Summary

The following findings come from a qualitative study of 50 Child Benefit (ChB) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) claimants who called either one or both of the Child Benefit and/or Tax Credits helplines in September 2007 to notify HMRC of their child's birth. Half of the claimants went through a pilot aligned process where they only had to make one call to either helpline to request an application form for both benefits⁴; the other half went through the standard non-aligned process (the control process) which involved calling both helplines separately.

Claimants' understanding of their responsibilities

There was confidence among claimants in their knowledge of every parent's eligibility for ChB; however, some parents were unsure of the eligibility and entitlement criteria for CTC, especially, but not exclusively, new parents. This seemed to originate from a general confusion around Child and Working Tax Credits, whether those in work were eligible and how the level of entitlement was worked out.

Existing claimants (with one or more children already) tended to be aware of the need to contact CTC about *any* changes in circumstances, such as income or address, as well as a new baby. They were also relatively familiar with the process of notifying ChB and CTC of a birth. New parents tended to be aware of ChB and CTC before the birth, although there was some lack of knowledge about the process of applying for such benefits.

Experiences of the helpline call

There was not necessarily a particular reason to contact one helpline before the other; claimants tended to telephone the first number which came to hand. Where a preference was given, reasons for calling the ChB helpline (first) were that it was perceived to be less daunting than CTC, which was felt to be a more complex benefit; and that they knew they were entitled to claim ChB. Motivations for contacting the CTC helpline (first) were because claimants wanted to get the more complicated claim 'out of the way'; to see if they were entitled (they were sure they were entitled to ChB); and because payments were understood to often be more generous than ChB.

⁴ Existing CTC claimants were not required to complete another application for CTC; they could update their details over the telephone (although parents were not always aware of this until they made the call to the helpline). They were still required to complete a separate ChB application form for their new baby.

Generally speaking, the initial call to either helpline was a positive experience, for both pilot and control participants. Staff were thought to be helpful, polite and informative, with the notification process deemed to be straightforward (whether pilot or control). Where any issues were raised, they tended to relate to the cost of calling (particularly waiting in a queue) or be a result of issues further along the process (not linked to the initial call).

Views of the pilot and control processes

Pilot claimants viewed the aligned system as smooth and efficient and to have met their needs at the time. Participants who had used the non-aligned process were also positive about their experience. When asked to compare the processes, views among pilot and control claimants were more positive towards the pilot. Reasons centred on the increased convenience of making one call; and the associated cost savings (particularly for those on lower incomes). Some also felt the aligned process would avoid the repetition of providing similar information twice. In addition, it was believed that the aligned system would ensure that no one entitled to CTC would miss out because they were unaware they could make a claim.

There was support for further alignment, such as a combined application form⁵ for new parents to cut down on the paperwork⁶. Opinion was less unanimous with regard to the alignment of award notices and payment dates: there were claimants who believed it was more straightforward to deal with these separately and others who preferred a single award notice and payment.

Although the aligned system was welcomed, it was not seen as a ‘must-have’, because the control process was felt to work efficiently and to provide a good service. When prompted, some did mention a vague concern that the aligned system could be more open to fraud⁷; others felt they would prefer to deal with ChB and CTC separately to be

⁵ Claimants in the study *Claimants' experiences of aligned tax credit and Child Benefit service relating to reporting education status* (Ipsos MORI, 2008) also tended to support the alignment of ChB and CTC application processes, although some interviewed in that study added a note of caution: that an aligned application process would need to be run well by HMRC in order to prevent claimants becoming confused between their CTC and ChB claims.

⁶ Existing tax credits claimants were able to update information relating to their CTC claim over the telephone and only had to complete a paper form to claim ChB. They stressed that those with an existing tax credits claim should continue complete a single ChB form rather than receiving a longer aligned form which would contain irrelevant sections about CTC.

⁷ This seemed to be related to the ease with which existing parents could update their CTC claim without the need for further paperwork.

sure that records were correct and no erroneous information had been passed between the teams.

Views of data sharing

Participants tended to be positive about ChB and CTC sharing data⁸ with each other. This was believed to be a more efficient way for the department to operate, as well as offering time and cost savings for the claimant.

Wider data sharing with other government departments⁹ was on the whole welcomed as long as it was done securely and on a ‘need to know’ basis. Such an approach was valued for reducing the need to make multiple calls to different bodies to give the same information. Some participants were less willing for certain types of data to be shared, such as medical or bank records. Participants were less keen about data being passed outside government, with concerns about the potential loss of data and how the data would be used. Some felt that (verbal) consent should be gained if information was being shared outside HMRC so they were aware who held what information and how it would be used. Others did not feel this was necessary and that by providing such information to ‘the government’ they had already consented to this and that they ‘had nothing to hide’.

Communications

Claimants felt that the helpline gave the process of updating a claim a personal touch, which made them confident that their case was being dealt with correctly, as well as allowing them to raise any queries they had.

Some more ‘computer-savvy’ claimants were interested in using the Internet, either to download application forms or to submit data electronically. Others were less keen, due to lack of knowledge of the Internet, lack of computer access, concerns around the security of providing data or a desire for the personal contact received from the helpline.

⁸ As occurred in the pilot process, when one helpline advisor updated both the ChB and CTC systems with the information claimants provided about the new baby.

⁹ The report *Service transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer* set out the steps the Government could take to lift its service performance substantially when interacting with citizens and businesses. It recommended setting up a service that would allow citizens to inform Government once of changes in circumstances such as bereavement, birth and change of address. The ‘Tell Us Once’ programme is a cross-government initiative set up to determine whether the recommendations are viable and will add value.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The process of applying for Child Benefit (ChB) and/or Child Tax Credit (CTC) can be lengthy and sometimes complicated, even for existing claimants. Under the current tax credits and Child Benefit systems, customers who have a new baby need to report this change in circumstance to both the tax credits and Child Benefit helplines; although both systems are administered by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), there is no facility to transfer information from one system to another. This requires claimants to make multiple contacts with HMRC and often provide the same information twice.

In light of this, HMRC piloted an ‘aligned’ process designed to offer claimants the opportunity to notify both the Child Benefit and tax credits systems of the birth of a new baby during one single telephone call, thereby making it easier and less stressful for them at this particularly busy period in their lives.

Claimants who called the tax credits or Child Benefit helplines between 10 October and 03 December 2007 to notify HMRC of the new birth in the household were assigned to either a ‘pilot’ or ‘control’ group¹⁰. The pilot group experienced an aligned process. During each pilot telephone call, the HMRC advisor taking the call offered to update both the tax credits and Child Benefit systems in the one phone call, and then did so, on the claimant’s behalf. The control group experienced the standard, non-aligned process, whereby claimants were required to make separate calls to the tax credits and Child Benefit helplines.

HMRC commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct qualitative research exploring claimants’ experiences and views of both the aligned and non-aligned processes¹¹.

The key aim was to identify the extent to which both control and pilot claimants were aware of the need to report the birth to both systems and whether they had contacted or intended to contact both or just one of the helplines.

¹⁰ The pilot group was processed by a dedicated team located in the Belfast Contact Centre from 10 October – 09 November 2007. The ChB control group was processed by a dedicated team located in the Washington Contact Centre from 10 October – 03 December 2007.

¹¹ Claimants who had not called the helplines (i.e. who had received the forms from another source) were not included in this research.

Specifically, the research was designed to explore:

- claimants' overall experience of the route they went through to claim ChB/CTC;
- any advantages or disadvantages of the approach and how it could be improved;
- their understanding of the information provided and whether they required any further information;
- their overall impression of the staff and the extent to which they were happy with the communication channels on offer; and,
- their views on the alternative approach, which they did not experience, and how this compared to their own experience.

Additionally, the research was designed to explore the extent to which claimants wanted to see an aligned service extended to other changes of circumstance and other government departments.

1.2 Methodology

50 in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face with ChB and CTC claimants by Ipsos MORI executives and directors, including:

- 25 with the pilot group
 - 13 who contacted the ChB helpline
 - 12 who contacted the CTC helpline
- 25 with the control group
 - 7 who contacted the ChB helpline first
 - 7 who contacted the ChB helpline only
 - 11 who contacted the CTC helpline first

These interviews contained a broad mix of those calling to report the birth of a first child (new parents), and those calling to report the birth of a second or subsequent child (existing parents), including single parents and couples. We also achieved a spread of interviews with individuals from a range of different backgrounds, covering gender, social grade, age and ethnicity, and interviews were conducted across the UK. Some

participants were also claiming other benefits, such as Working Tax Credit (WTC), Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance.

Although a range of age groups were interviewed, claimants tended to be younger and at an earlier life stage than those interviewed as part of the full-time education alignment project – they tended to be 'starting out' rather than leading more settled and established lives.

2. Claimants' understanding of their responsibilities and entitlements

2.1 Awareness of ChB and CTC

Generally speaking, existing parents were familiar with the process of notifying the ChB and CTC teams about the birth of a baby. Existing parents assumed that the process would be the same for reporting the birth of their second or subsequent child and were aware of the need to contact ChB and CTC after the birth and the general procedure involved. Existing parents also tended to be aware of the need to contact CTC about any changes in circumstances, such as changes in income or address details.

"We knew from [a previous child] really, because we were already on the system, and it's just a case of informing them and taking it from there really"
Control claimant, existing parent, male (C1)

Although new parents did not have the benefit of previous experience, they tended to be aware of ChB and CTC before the birth of their child, and of the need to notify the teams of the birth. This was largely due to word-of-mouth (i.e. through friends/family); however, some received information about these entitlements from the midwife or health visitor, or from information included in the 'bounty pack' they received at the hospital.

"I got an information pack... Once you've had the baby you go to Child Benefit and notify them, and then you notify the Child Tax Credit"
Control claimant, new parent, female (C2)

"I think when I got the bounty pack and read up on it, that's when I knew I could apply for [these]... That's where I got my information from"
Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P1)

Some parents also found out about ChB and CTC through the media (i.e. on television, in newspaper reports or from HMRC adverts), while others obtained information through pregnancy-related books and leaflets, or from direct experience of working in the health sector or childcare fields.

"I used to hear it on the news and people who'd had babies before me would tell me I need to apply"
Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P2)

"I knew about Child Benefit because I work in the childcare field"
Control claimant, new parent, female (C3)

2.2 Perception of entitlement

All the claimants interviewed were aware that all parents are entitled to claim ChB and that each family receives a non means-tested flat-rate amount.

Despite a generally high level of awareness of CTC, some parents were unsure of the eligibility and entitlement criteria for this financial support – especially, but not exclusively, new parents. This seemed to stem from a lack of awareness about tax credits more generally, with some participants seemingly unclear about the differences between CTC and WTC. However, this uncertainty did not appear to prevent parents from engaging with the tax credits system.

"I didn't know the difference between Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit... There's no information readily available unless you go on the Internet and have a look"

Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P1)

Although bounty packs and other similar sources of information such as pregnancy books and leaflets provided information about what benefits and credits were available to new parents, there was a perception that they did not cover eligibility criteria clearly enough.

There was a lack of awareness about how much CTC each family is entitled to and how this amount was calculated. Some were also unclear whether they were entitled to it at all. Indeed some assumed (sometimes incorrectly) that they would not be entitled to CTC and therefore had not applied for it¹². There tended to be an assumption that the income cut-off for entitlement to CTC was much lower than it actually is. As such, there was a perception that families where one or more parents were working and earning a 'reasonable living' would not qualify for this financial assistance.

"I've always assumed that because we have a reasonably high, or what I think of as a reasonably high household income... that we wouldn't be entitled to any benefits"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C4)

There was also some sense from experience, word-of-mouth, or the media that the process of applying for CTC might be complicated, and this perception could also act as a deterrent to some potential claimants. Indeed, some who were only claiming ChB

¹² Please note that HMRC requested that Ipsos MORI place a quota on those contacting ChB only to explore the reasons why some eligible CTC claimants had not contacted the tax credits helpline.

had previous experience of claiming CTC and believed that the small amount they were entitled to was not worth the perceived ‘hassle’ of applying and updating changes of circumstances.

2.3 When to notify HMRC

Opinion was divided as to how soon individuals were required to notify HMRC of their child’s birth. Some thought they needed to do this within the first four to six weeks, others thought it was three months. However, when prompted, participants were unclear about why they felt this to be the case; while some vaguely cited information in the bounty pack and others cited the helpline, none were certain about the specific deadline. Claimants were on the whole keen to notify HMRC relatively soon in order to start receiving their entitlements as quickly as possible and minimise any back-dating. However some, particularly new parents, delayed notification slightly as they had more immediate priorities to contend with, such as the mother’s health or adjusting to life with a baby.

“I know you can backdate up to three months for Child Benefit but I wasn’t sure about Child Tax Credit so as soon as I found my feet I basically phoned up and informed them [of the birth]”

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P3)

Some claimants also cited more ‘administrative’ reasons for taking a little longer to notify HMRC, and this was linked to the need to register the child’s birth before contacting HMRC to apply for ChB. Reasons for this included needing a second NHS number for twins or because they had to wait some weeks after the birth for an appointment at the Register Office. Others wished to wait for their partner to take time off from work to accompany them to register the birth.

3. Experiences of the call(s)

Overall, the initial telephone call to either ChB or CTC advisors, or both, was found to be a positive experience, with few issues or problems raised. Staff were felt to be helpful, polite and informative and the initial notification process was deemed to be straightforward. Where any issues were raised, they tended to be as a result of issues further along the process, rather than anything specific to the initial telephone call.

3.1 Contacting the helpline(s)

Finding out the telephone number

A range of sources were cited for finding out the telephone number for ChB and CTC helplines. As discussed in the previous section, friends and family, along with health visitors and midwives, were key sources of information and advice. Not only did these individuals inform participants of the need to notify HMRC of the birth, they also commonly provided them with the contact number(s).

Some participants said they had found the telephone number(s) in the bounty pack, or came across it on the Internet or (for existing parents) in previous communication from HMRC. Others were given the number to call by Jobcentre Plus or other government organisations.

"I just googled it, so I put in Child Benefit and it gave you a Child Benefit hotline number"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C4)

"Sometimes you get a letter [from CTC] saying, have you changed your circumstances... and there's usually a number on there"

Control claimant, existing parent, female (C5)

Timing of contacting helplines

Both pilot and control claimants tended to contact the helpline around three weeks after the birth (for both ChB and CTC)¹³, however a small number waited longer – either until they felt ready physically, or until they had settled into more of a routine a few weeks after the birth (after the initial flurry of activity had diminished). Control claimants generally said they tried to contact the second helpline fairly promptly (the same day or a few days later).

¹³ As fieldwork took place a number of months after the initial phone call, recall of these timescales was based very much on perception.

For some, both pilot and control, there was no conscious decision made about whom to call – the telephone number they dialled was simply the first one they had to hand.

"To be honest in the folder where I've got the paperwork, that's [CTC] the first one [I found]"

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P4)

"I phoned both [ChB and CTC] at about the same time... There was no specific reason"

Control claimant, existing parent, male (C6)

Some struggled to remember which helpline they had called first, until interviewer probing helped jog their memory, suggesting that this was not a 'top-of-mind' issue for many. However, this could be due to the length of time which had elapsed between the initial call and the research fieldwork.

Order of contacting helplines

A number of participants made a conscious decision to call ChB first and similar reasons were given by the pilot and control groups. Reasons given for this were:

- Because they knew they were entitled to ChB regardless of income level, which was not always the case with CTC.

"I knew that I was entitled to Child Benefit and I wasn't sure about Child Tax Credit"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C3)

- A belief that the process of claiming CTC was more complex or daunting, either through previous direct experience of contacting the TC helpline or through a perception (from friends/relatives or the media) that this was the case. Existing parents remembered from previous experience of completing the CTC form that it was longer and more detailed than the ChB form. Consequently, some preferred to notify ChB first as this was perceived as 'easier', and then contact CTC later¹⁴.

"I called the Child Benefit first because the Tax Credit would have taken longer to sort out"

Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P5)

¹⁴ This perception was held despite the fact that notifying the CTC team of a second or subsequent birth is more straightforward and can be completed by telephone.

Others called CTC first, for similar reasons to those cited above, but took an alternative perspective:

- to check entitlement to CTC – again, ChB was widely known to be available to all, but there was greater confusion around CTC and these claimants said they wanted to confirm their entitlement; and
- some felt that, because claiming CTC was a more complicated process, it would be best to ‘get it out of the way first’.

*“I thought that Child Benefit is quite straightforward so I thought I’d deal with that quite quick so I’ll do that last, and I thought Child Tax Credit they’ll ask me questions on the phone”
Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P1)*

In addition, other reasons were also given for calling CTC first.

- Payments for CTC tended to be larger, so there was often a greater desire to confirm entitlement and begin receiving this bigger sum of money.
- Some claimants were also aware that they needed to send the Birth Certificate away in order to claim ChB. While some requested an application form before registering the birth, others preferred to wait until they had the Birth Certificate before calling the ChB helpline. The fact that no Birth Certificate was required for claiming CTC meant that some (especially those who took longer to register the birth) called CTC before the child was registered and before they applied for ChB.
- Some existing parents believed they could update CTC by telephone (which was felt to be simpler and quicker than the ChB form) and this encouraged them to contact CTC ahead of the ChB helpline.

3.2 Overall experiences of the call

Regardless of whether pilot participants contacted the ChB or CTC helpline, their experience of the call tended to be very positive. The telephone call itself was felt to be relatively straightforward; staff were thought to be very helpful and polite and able to tell callers everything they needed to know and answer any questions.

*“Well overall the person at the other end [of the ChB helpline] was really polite, very helpful to be honest. Sorted my details out straight away”
Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P6)*

Some participants also mentioned spontaneously that they were pleased to have everything dealt with in one telephone call. The fact that the applications were dealt with separately from that point on (after the initial call) did not seem to confuse any pilot participants or cause any problems.

"I phoned them up and they turned round and said, well we'll send out the Child Benefit forms. I said fab, that's fine, it saves me another phone call"
Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P7)

Control participants also had a positive experience of contacting the helplines. Again, similar to the pilot, their experiences of the calls were positive, with staff deemed to be friendly and helpful, and the process of making the calls to be straightforward.

"Everyone I spoke to was really nice, helpful and explained everything bit by bit, and it got me from A to B, where I wanted to be"
Control claimant, new parent, female (C7)

It was largely assumed that ChB and CTC were two separate teams, with little awareness or thought given to which department they belonged to, so the fact that claimants had to make two separate calls (and two separate claims) was not called into question.

Some called both helplines in quick succession, while others waited longer to call the second helpline. The main reason for contacting both helplines in quick succession was to get the paperwork 'over and done with' or to sort out both claims while they had the documentation relating to their child (and any previous claims) to hand.

Claimants using the pilot and the control processes were pleased - and some were surprised - with the efficiency of the call(s); they had expected the process to be 'more hassle' or to take longer than they experienced.

"I thought they'd be such a busy organisation... I imagined they'd be quite over-rushed and I'd be waiting a long time on the phone, and I wasn't at all, it was all really quick and an easy process"
Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P8)

"I've not had any problems with either [CTC or ChB helplines] actually"
Control claimant, existing parent, male (C8)

Applying for ChB and CTC was also felt to compare favourably with the process of applying for other state benefits, with fewer and simpler questions to answer.

"I thought [the process] would be complicated because other benefits like Income Support are complicated, but it wasn't"
Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P9)

However, some concerns were raised by some pilot and control participants when probed further by the interviewer about their experience. The main issue was the length of time it could take to get through to an advisor. This was exacerbated by worries about the cost of the call, particularly if the claimant was calling from a mobile^{15,16}.

"[I don't like to call], because it's so expensive to phone them on my mobile, and they don't phone you back"
Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P7)

Nevertheless, despite these issues, the initial telephone call(s) were generally felt to be a positive experience for both pilot and control participants, and much more straightforward than they had anticipated.

¹⁵ While there was acknowledgement that the helplines were '0845' numbers, and not premium rate, these were perceived to be expensive when calling from a mobile.

¹⁶ In addition, some claimants spoke of feeling rushed by an advisor or feeling that the advisor could have explained the next steps to them more clearly.

4. Views of the pilot aligned service

Claimants' feelings about the service they received when notifying HMRC of the birth seemed to be influenced more by their familiarity with the system of applying for ChB and CTC than by whether they used the pilot or control process. Existing (pilot and control) parents tended to be aware of the basic stages of the process and were comfortable with what was involved; for example, some mentioned that they had appropriate contact details for one or both of the helplines from previous correspondence, that they knew the type of information they would be asked for and that they would have to send their child's Birth Certificate to claim ChB. By contrast, some new parents (from both groups) said the process of notifying HMRC was a little more challenging because they were coping with the many pressures of being a parent for the first time and were unfamiliar with what was involved in making an application.

"It's my first time. It was a little bit hard actually for me to begin with... I had no idea how to do anything"

Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P8)

4.1 Views of the pilot process based on experience

Pilot claimants generally thought the aligned process had worked smoothly and effectively to allow them to inform HMRC of the birth of their child in order to apply for ChB and CTC. Overall, this process was seen to meet the needs of participants at the time, allowing them to supply the necessary information, and be sent the appropriate forms for ChB and CTC (or amend CTC information for existing parents).

"I remember my experience as being quite good. I have been quite satisfied with the way the process has basically continued and I haven't really experienced any problems"

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P3)

"It's been quite easy, easier than I thought it would be"

Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P2)

Some existing parents had spontaneously noticed the difference between the pilot process and their previous experience of notifying HMRC about the birth of an older child. This tended to be those who were particularly engaged and knowledgeable about the need to notify HMRC and the procedure for doing so. These claimants were all positive about making a single initial call to notify HMRC of the birth.

"I just thought it's obviously a new way that they've sorted it. I thought obviously it's going to save time or save money"
Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P10)

Any negative views of their experience typically related to previous problems with payments and overpayments or perceptions that the system in general was too complex, rather than their experiences of the pilot notification process itself. Claimants tended to find it difficult to separate the notification aspect from the rest of the ChB and CTC claim experience.

It is worth emphasising that participants' views about the process they had been through, whether pilot or control, were not always strong. Some struggled to remember the details, including distinguishing the initial call from subsequent calls and subsequent aspects of the process. While this was related in part to the time elapsed since they notified HMRC (which was between four and six months before the interview), it also appeared to be because participants felt the experience was not particularly memorable in the context of the birth and first few months of life of their child. However, this was not viewed as a concern; participants generally acknowledged that processes which were straightforward were not typically remembered in detail and took this as further confirmation that their experience of notifying HMRC went smoothly.

4.2 Views of the control process based on experience

Participants who had used the non-aligned process were also on the whole positive about the experience of notifying HMRC of the birth of their child. As with pilot participants, the process was seen as fairly straightforward and efficient, and was felt to provide what was required at the time – a way to request the forms to claim child-related benefits and credits and to raise any queries they had.

"I honestly found it all quite simple really. The most straightforward experience I've had in years, things just don't go that smoothly normally"
Control claimant, existing parent, female (C10)

"It was nice and quick and easy and they were efficient with getting the stuff back that I was worried about sending off"
Control claimant, new parent, female (C11)

Reflecting these broadly positive views, no control participants spontaneously felt that there was a need for alignment of the systems for notifying ChB and CTC, either at the

initial call stage or later in the process (for example, by moving to a single award notice).

As was the case for the pilot group, the main differences in views among control claimants were a result of their familiarity with the system. Existing control parents were again more confident about using the system and what they would be asked for. Some among the existing control parents shared the perception of those existing pilot parents that making a change to their CTC claim would be simpler than the original application process. Such existing parents appreciated that most of their details were already on record and they could update these regarding the birth of their new child over the telephone.

4.3 Hypothetical views of aligned vs. non-aligned processes

When pilot and control claimants were asked to compare the aligned and non-aligned processes, the reactions of both groups, while not strong, were very positive about the aligned process. Participants' reasons for preferring the aligned system centred on the increased convenience of making one call rather than two, and the time this saved. The associated cost savings of spending less time on the telephone were particularly important to those on lower incomes. Some also mentioned that the aligned system would allow them to avoid the repetition of giving similar information to both the ChB and CTC helplines. Similar reasons were cited by pilot and control claimants.

"It's just more convenient to have the one person to give all your information to, and just really easy"

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P6)

"Having to talk to separate people and having to go through the same process, over the same thing, the same information twice. With this one there's one person dealing with two things, so it's easier, less stressful"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C2)

Another advantage of the aligned process cited by some participants was that it would ensure that no one who was entitled to CTC would miss out because they were unaware that they could make a claim. This was seen as especially important by those in the control group who were receiving ChB but had not claimed CTC.

"It will help you not to miss your claim for Tax Credits if you are entitled to it"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C4)

Participants generally found it difficult to think of any disadvantages to introducing the aligned system for making the initial call to notify HMRC of the birth. Aligning the process was not something claimants had previously thought about, but it did seem to make sense to them on the basis of increased convenience and the likely decreased cost of making a single call, albeit not something likely to have a major impact on their overall experience.

However, when prompted by the interviewer for any concerns, some did mention hypothetical disadvantages associated with an aligned system (no pilot claimants reported actually experiencing any of these problems). There was limited concern that the aligned process could be more open to fraud than having two separate systems. This was linked to surprise among some parents about how easy it was to update their CTC claim without the need for further paperwork, and a perception that, if the aligned system followed a similar pattern, this would allow easier access to increased payments from both ChB and CTC.

"It might be a bit too easy for people to ring up to claim a Tax Credit and it maybe they've got another child but I think it would be a bit easy to say, oh I've just had another one and they'll say oh well I'll just update your claim then"

Control claimant, existing parent, female (C5)

Upon probing for disadvantages, some control participants also said they might actually prefer to deal with the two systems separately for peace of mind, so they were certain that both ChB and CTC had updated their records to reflect the birth and issued application forms where appropriate. Such claimants tended to be content with the current system for notifying HMRC and did not see any particular need to change the process (although they were not strongly opposed to the aligned system).

"I'd rather ring both of them, then you know they've got it... They might forget and go off and deal with another customer and completely forget about it [updating other team]"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C7)

Overall then, pilot and control claimants broadly welcomed the aligned process and could think of few disadvantages, but it was not a change that was always felt to have very much impact. Generally, the aligned system was seen as a sensible improvement to the process, but not an essential one. For control claimants, this reflected their perceptions that the process they used had worked well, but similar sentiments were also expressed by some pilot participants, despite their positive experience of the aligned system.

"It doesn't actually seem that much different really"
Control claimant, new parent, female (C12)

"It doesn't really make a difference to me to be honest with you... When you're at home you can always juggle things and phone calls aren't a major issue so even if I had to call up twice, I wouldn't mind really..."
Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P3)

On the other hand, some pilot claimants did suggest that they would notice if, should they need to use it again, the system had reverted to the non-aligned process. They felt that this would probably be slightly frustrating, as they could see no reason to return to the non-aligned system. Their frustration would be linked to the (comparative) inconvenience of making two calls rather than one to notify HMRC of the birth.

"To be honest I probably would be upset [if I had to use the control process] because it'll be a lot easier for them to deal with both, especially [after] just having a baby"

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P4)

4.4 Views on further alignment of ChB and CTC processes

Currently, in addition to making two calls to notify HMRC of the birth, parents applying for ChB and CTC must complete separate forms (this is for first-time parents only since existing parents are able to update their CTC information via telephone) and receive individual ChB and CTC award notices outlining what payments they will receive.

When asked about further alignment of the ChB and CTC processes (following the initial notification telephone call), there was some support for having a single application form. Some parents mentioned this spontaneously, and they generally felt just having one form to complete would make the process easier, particularly given the perceived overlap in the information required. This view was prevalent among new parents who perceived the CTC form as long and somewhat intimidating. Any reduction in the amount of paperwork they needed to fill in would therefore be appreciated.

"Well, if it's the same place it's a bit silly because if they can do it in one [form] wouldn't that be a better idea... If it saves you time it makes sense really"
Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P8)

Existing parents, who had updated their CTC details during the initial notification telephone call (and so only needed to complete the ChB form), felt an aligned application form would be helpful for new parents, but wished to retain the option for

existing parents to complete only the much simpler ChB application¹⁷. They did not see the value in having to complete a long form for subsequent children, and were happy with updating CTC by telephone and returning the shorter ChB form.

There was less consensus about further alignment of award notices and benefit payments. Those who supported a single award notice for ChB and CTC said this would reduce the paperwork they had to read and understand, store and find if needed. Some also preferred having all the information about their HMRC entitlements in one place, as they believed this would be more convenient.

"If they come together [award notices] it would reduce the paperwork I have to keep"

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P11)

By contrast, some participants said they would prefer to continue receiving separate award notices for ChB and CTC. This was again based on a perception of greater convenience; these claimants felt it was easier to keep track of the two payments separately, particularly as CTC payments would alter as their circumstances changed, but ChB is paid at a consistent level. Some were concerned that alignment of award notices may be confusing or unclear, and felt it was simpler to continue with the current system.

"It's easier to get two [Award Notices] because then you know where you're coming and going with both. They're not the same, they're separate, and that's how it should stay"

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P7)

The range of views about further alignment were expressed by both pilot and control claimants.

4.5 Views of the pilot process and further alignment in FTE research for HMRC

Views of the pilot process in the FTE project were similar to the results found here. Claimants were positive about the aligned process and saw alignment as mutually beneficial for both HMRC and themselves. Claimants felt that the key benefits to alignment were efficiency, ease of use and a reduction in the potential for making errors, both on the part of claimants and HMRC.

¹⁷ As ChB is available to all parents, and is not dependent on income, the form is shorter and therefore easier to complete than the CTC form, which seeks additional information on household income.

However, FTE claimants had mixed views as to whether alignment should be extended further. Some claimants felt that they received too much duplicate correspondence and hence favoured the idea of ChB and CTC intention¹⁸ and reminder letters being aligned; others, who had developed filing systems for different benefits, wanted letters from each system to remain separate.

¹⁸ When a child reaches 16, HMRC send out a letter asking the parent whether the child intends to carry on in full-time education; these are called a reminder letter for Child Tax Credit and an intention letter for Child Benefit.

5. Views of data sharing

Sir David Varney's report for HM Treasury¹⁹ set out the steps that government could take in the 2007 Comprehensive Service Review (CSR) to lift substantially its service performance when interacting with citizens and businesses. In his "blueprint for change" Sir David Varney recommended setting up a service that would allow citizens to inform government once of their change in circumstances; and that initially this should cover bereavement, birth and change of address.

The Varney report cited two objectives:

- To improve the citizen's experience when they interact with government, ideally matching the best of the private sector; and
- To generate efficiency savings for government through the reduction of unnecessary contacts, encouraging the use of less expensive communication channels; and streamlining and rationalising business processes.

The 'Tell Us Once' (TWO) Programme is a cross-government initiative which has been set up to manage an intensive programme of piloting, running of e-channel prototypes and research between June 2007 and March 2009 to determine whether Sir David Varney's recommendations are viable and will add real value to the citizen's interaction with government. The programme is being led by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

To support the work of the TWO initiative, customers interviewed in the Reporting Births study were asked for their views on wider sharing of data both within HMRC and across government as a whole. Given that the Reporting Births pilot had required customers' data to be shared between CTC and ChB systems, HMRC offered to explore these customers' views in light of their experiences.

5.1 Views of data sharing within HMRC

Generally speaking, participants were positive about the ChB and CTC teams sharing relevant data with one other. As mentioned earlier, claimants were on the whole unaware that HMRC deals with both ChB and CTC; as they were provided with two separate telephone numbers to call, two separate forms to complete and received two

¹⁹ Sir David Varney, Service transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer, December 2006

separate award notices, there was an assumption that the teams were completely distinct. Participants tended to think of ChB and CTC loosely as ‘the government’.

However, when informed by the interviewer that both teams were in fact part of HMRC, it was felt to make sense for them to work together (as in the pilot process) and to share information with each other. As discussed in previous chapters, an aligned notification process was felt to make it easier for the claimant in terms of convenience, time required to give or update personal data, and cost (cheaper to make one call than two, especially if multiple calls are subsequently made).

“Generally no, not really [any worries]. If they’re the same department, I can’t see there being a big problem... If you’ve got a system in place, like a computer system, then it shouldn’t really be a problem”

Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P8)

There were few spontaneous concerns raised about the ChB and CTC teams working more closely and sharing relevant customer data, as this was believed to be a more efficient way of government operating. Some claimants queried whether the information would be transferred electronically or via paper between the teams, with electronic transfer of data viewed as more secure than using paper. Nevertheless, when prompted by the interviewer for concerns, some potential issues were raised about data sharing between ChB and CTC, even among those who were ‘pro-pilot’. These concerns were centred on whether the information might not always be passed on correctly or promptly to the other team, which could lead to errors or delays in payments and ultimately more hassle for the claimant in the long run.

“I would prefer if I phoned two people actually... They could put the wrong details [on the system]... what if they spelt her name wrong? What if the date of birth’s wrong? Because if they put her date of birth on, and they’re paying me too much money, because I’m going to have to pay it back”

Control claimant, existing parent, female (C13)

Some participants were concerned that such a measure could be used as a way to cut down the number of staff working on the helplines. They were not in favour of any reduction, as this believed this would have an effect on how long it would take to get through to speak to the helpline advisors, which some felt was at times long enough currently.

However, there was a general sense that there was little to be concerned about regarding the ChB and CTC teams – which were both part of HMRC - sharing information they received on the birth of a child or other changes in circumstances,

such as a change of address. This was information that claimants could understand to be relevant and important for both teams to know to take a claim forward.

5.2 Views of ‘Tell us Once’ and wider data sharing across government

As well as data sharing between the ChB and CTC teams, participants were asked their views on wider data sharing across government (i.e. between other government departments).

There was a sense that only participants in receipt of other benefits (such as Housing Benefit, Income Support or Jobseeker’s Allowance) were aware of the need to inform *other government departments* about a new baby. Some of these did not realise they were required to inform benefit providers where they did not regard that benefit as related to their child (such as Housing Benefit). Those who were not claiming any other benefits tended to be unaware of any government departments, besides HMRC, who would need to know this information about their child.

Some claimants (both those receiving other benefits and non-benefit claimants) were also sceptical about why other government departments or public sector organisations, such as the local council, would need to know this information. They assumed the sole reason would be to ‘take more money’ from them.

“No [not aware of other organisations would need to inform]...you have to let the council know? What, so they can take more money?”

Control claimant, existing parent, female (C10)

In the main, as long as personal information was only being passed between government departments and agencies, there were few issues or concerns about wider information sharing as long as it was done in a secure way and on a ‘need to know’ basis. Claimants could, in the main, see the value of information sharing if they perceived a purpose in the department having that information. Most felt that data sharing could lessen the burden on the claimant by reducing the need to make multiple calls to different bodies, often to notify them of the same information. However, they were less convinced about the transfer of apparently irrelevant information (i.e. en masse transferral of data) to another department.

“It would be much quicker if everybody was aware of it. You wouldn’t have to keep making phone calls or visit different places and inform them”

Control claimant, new parent, female (C3)

Data sharing between different government bodies would, it was also felt, reduce the risk of fraudulent applications for benefits. There was a sense that having government bodies update one another with information would decrease the risk of this happening, as departments and agencies could pick up where an individual had provided contradictory information or made multiple claims²⁰.

"I think also from a fraud point of view, it's better to share information where it's made available. I think it probably makes people a little bit more careful. A little bit more, hang on a minute, let's not try mucking around with the system too much if they know [different departments] talk and communicate"

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P12)

Participants were however, less keen on data being passed outside government, i.e. to private companies, an issue which was raised spontaneously by participants.

"I think probably a concern could be your details being passed off to someone, a third party, or in error"

Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P8)

Some concerns were also raised about wider data sharing due to the potential for personal data to be lost en route²¹. It was felt that in order for wider data sharing to take place, there was a need to ensure that appropriate security systems were in place to minimise any risks of data being lost and that these were observed by staff. However, it was largely assumed that this would occur if the TUO system was introduced.

"Well no, if the information's held securely then it shouldn't be a concern, it could be any sort of identity fraud or anything like that with the information, but then you could have that with individual government bodies, so it would just be the same amount of risk, I suppose, probably less if it's held centrally"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C12)

5.3 The need to gain consent

Generally speaking, participants were happy with data being shared between the ChB and CTC teams and there was no great desire for consent to be gained first in order for this to happen. Indeed, as discussed in previous chapters, there was a great deal of

²⁰ Concerns cited by some claimants about the greater potential for fraud if information is only submitted to the original department over the phone – with no written evidence – should also be born in mind.

²¹ A number of interviews took place shortly after news emerged that HMRC disks containing personal information of ChB claimants had gone missing and so this would have been relatively fresh in their minds and could have affected the extent to which this concern was cited.

support for anything which would make the process of notifying HMRC of a birth easier for the individual.

In terms of gaining consent before sharing data outside HMRC, views were more mixed. As there was a greater degree of caution expressed by some about passing data outside HMRC than between HMRC teams, it was evident that assurances needed to be provided about whom this information would be shared with, and for what purposes. Some claimants were keen on data only being passed to another department once consent had been obtained for this, although others did not feel this was necessary.

"Probably ask permission because not everybody's going to want them to see information so it would be nice to be asked...and they're losing people's details"

Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P2)

"They don't need my consent because when you sign the claim form you give them the permission to do everything they want to do."

Control claimant, existing parent, female (C14)

Upon probing by the interviewer, some of those advocating consent felt it should be offered more as a matter of courtesy, whilst others felt that consent should be given by the individual, informing them initially that their data would be shared more widely and with the right for them to decline this. Others wanted some degree of detail to be provided, such as which departments information would be shared with and what data would be passed on. If consent was required, the general view was that verbal agreement was sufficient²².

Views were also mixed on what types of data should be shared. Assuming it was done securely, some participants felt it would be acceptable for 'any' data to be shared, with no restrictions—largely because it was felt that the government should 'know this data anyway.' Others believed that an aspect of receiving state benefits was allowing the state to access personal information as it wished.

"It's all information they need to update their records to know your eligibility so obviously they have got that right now. If you're claiming from them then they've got the right to know about your circumstances and it all boils down to confidentiality"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C11)

²² Some, usually those who had had issues in the past with CTC claims, wanted some written confirmation.

There was more hesitation on the part of others, who emphasised the importance of only passing on ‘relevant’ information and considered that nothing ‘too personal’ should be shared. However, ‘personal’ data appeared to mean different things to different people – some considered that no bank account details or National Insurance numbers should be shared, whilst others were more ‘protective’ of the information relating to their child rather than themselves.

“I suppose just things like bank details, and things to do, how your money can be accessed, and that sort of thing, that would be the worry, not necessarily that information side of things, but how that information could be used”

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P6)

“In terms of my children’s details I would feel quite strongly about those going [missing] really”

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P3)

6. Communications

6.1 Views of the helpline

The ChB and CTC helplines were viewed positively by both pilot and control participants, with staff, in the main, found to be helpful, professional, and informative. There was also a perception that the helplines had long opening hours (from 8am-8pm), which was viewed very favourably – providing claimants greater flexibility about the time they contact the helplines.

However, some concerns were raised about the length of time it can take to get through to either helpline. This notion was based on general experience of getting in touch with the helplines, rather than anything exclusive to the initial call(s) to notify HMRC of the birth. Not only did participants find time spent queuing on the telephone frustrating, but many, particularly those on lower incomes, were worried about the impact this had on the cost of the call, especially if they were calling from a mobile telephone. There was also a perception among some that the helplines were ‘premium rate’ numbers²³, which, when dialled from a mobile telephone, could be very expensive. Others felt the helpline numbers should be freephone or that if the call was likely to be lengthy there should be a system for staff to call claimants back.

“I don’t know if it’s free if you phone on the landline or at a lower rate but it can be very expensive if you ring on your mobile and some people don’t have landlines so it can be very expensive”

Control claimant, new parent, female (C3)

Despite this, claimants on the whole stated a preference for the helpline over any other communications channel.

6.2 Other methods

Some who had had trouble completing the forms, largely due to language issues, would prefer face-to-face assistance rather than telephone contact. However, others were not convinced how helpful this would be in reality. They believed that visiting an Enquiry Centre would be impractical for parents with young babies in terms of the time and effort it would take to leave the house. Some of the mothers also cited health reasons why they would be reluctant to notify or seek advice in person soon after the

²³ It is believed this misunderstanding was due to some claimants believing any telephone number beginning ‘08’ was premium rate, although some did appreciate that ‘0845’ was only charged at local rate from landlines.

birth. Awareness of Enquiry Centres was low - many had never heard of the term and had no idea where these Centres were located. While some liked the possibility of 'dropping in', to inform an advisor face-to-face and perhaps get assistance with completing the forms, it was on the whole felt to be easier and cheaper to make a telephone call.

Sending forms and other materials to HMRC via post was felt to be an acceptable part of the process, although there were some comments about the time delivery could take and also, mainly hypothetically, about the potential for valuable items (such as the Birth Certificate) to go missing²⁴. Claimants were generally content to notify HMRC using the helpline, for reasons of time and convenience, but to continue to use the post to convey forms and other documents. There was a hypothetical belief cited by some that claimants with poor English could ask others to assist them in completing the forms, and so the option of giving data via a form should always be there for those who require it²⁵.

Participants were also asked how they would feel about using the Internet to notify HMRC of changes in circumstances such as a new baby, and views were mixed. Those who had access at home and were fairly 'computer-savvy' welcomed the idea of greater use of the Internet. Some would like to download application forms (to complete by hand and submit by post), others would be happy to submit a claim and/or update changes of circumstance online (assuming the necessary security). The Internet was felt to be more convenient as it could be accessed at any time and at their convenience, with no need to wait to speak to a helpline advisor or for the form to arrive.

"I've used the Internet all the time, the Internet is my thing. I do everything on the Internet, especially with being at work as well, it's just easier than having to wait on the phone and mess about that way... I think it would cut out a lot of paperwork as well, it seems the way forward to me"

Pilot claimant, new parent, female (P8)

Some did not have access to a computer or the Internet and so using this communication channel was not an option for them. Others said they would simply prefer to speak to an advisor, largely because they valued a more personal approach

²⁴ There was only a single incident among our participants of a form not arriving at a claimant's home. After chasing, the original form was received at the same time as the replacement form.

²⁵ One participant said she preferred not to speak to an advisor at all, but would rather all communication was done via post (she disliked speaking on the telephone).

and liked the opportunity to raise any concerns or queries there and then. Speaking to an advisor rather than submitting information online was also felt to provide greater piece of mind that the information had been received and was being processed. Giving information via telephone or paper form was also perceived by some to be more secure than providing information online. There was no difference in views between the pilot and control groups.

"I would prefer phoning up, because I could speak to somebody and they'll tell me over the phone instead of me looking on the computer and reading a lot of stuff"

Control claimant, new parent, female (C7)

"I will use the Internet for information but I will not complete a form like Child Benefit form or Child Tax Credit online. I personally wouldn't because of obviously security reasons"

Pilot claimant, existing parent, female (P3)

Generally speaking, the helpline was viewed favourably by pilot and control participants, and proved to be the most popular channel for communicating with HMRC. However, there did appear to be some appetite for using the Internet to download forms or (for some) to notify HMRC of changes of circumstances. The practical issues around the ease of leaving the house with a small baby meant that face-to-face communication was not very popular among claimants at this stage of their lives; there was, however, a sense that this option should be available for those who require it, such as claimants with low literacy levels or for whom English is not their first language. When asked about their personal preferences, on the whole, participants were keen to continue using the helplines to notify ChB and CTC of a birth and any other changes in circumstances, sending off completed claim forms (and supplementary documents) and receiving award notices by post.

7. Conclusions

The aligned pilot process for reporting a birth was viewed favourably by pilot and control participants. It was valued for saving time and reducing the burden on claimants to inform ChB and CTC of similar information. It was also felt to save callers money (in terms of telephone bills), as it was cheaper to make one call rather than two. The aligned process was perceived to improve and streamline the process of applying for ChB and CTC, at a particularly busy time for parents. Nevertheless, opinions were not strong, and those who had used the control process were generally satisfied with the process they used to inform HMRC of their child's birth. Although the pilot process was generally the preferred option, it was felt that the control approach was not sufficiently different to have much of an impact on claimants' overall experiences of claiming ChB and CTC.

The helpline was viewed positively by pilot and control claimants as a way to notify HMRC of changes of circumstances and to raise any queries. There was also some appetite among the more 'computer-savvy' individuals for using the Internet to search for information and to download application forms, as well as, in some cases, to submit information. However, there were also claimants who were averse to this communication channel; some disliked using computers or did not have Internet access; others had concerns around data security or preferred the personal contact offered via the helpline. Overall, there was strong support for continued use of the helpline to notify HMRC of any changes in circumstances.

There was support for further alignment, such as a combined application form for new parents to cut down on the paperwork. Existing claimants, who were able to update information relating to their CTC claim over the telephone, wished to be able to complete the shorter ChB form rather than a combined form for their subsequent children. Opinion was less unanimous with regard to whether separate ChB and CTC award notices and payment dates were preferential to aligned ones with views expressed supporting both concepts.

Generally speaking, it was felt that data sharing between ChB and CTC was a good idea, as a way for the department to operate more efficiently, as well as bringing time and cost savings for the claimant. Some concerns were voiced around the potential for data not always to be passed on correctly or promptly, or that this could be a 'backdoor' way to reduce staffing levels on the helplines. However, these concerns were not

widespread, and most claimants felt that, because both departments are part of HMRC, it made logical sense for them operate in a more joined-up way.

Wider data sharing with other government departments was on the whole viewed positively as long as it was done securely and on a 'need to know' basis. Participants welcomed a reduction in the need to make multiple calls to different bodies to give the same information. However, some participants were less willing for certain types of data to be shared, such as medical or bank records.

Participants were less keen about data being passed outside government, with concerns about the potential loss of data and how the data would be used.

Views around the issue of consent were mixed; some felt that (verbal) consent should be gained if information was being shared outside HMRC so individuals were aware who held what information and how it would be used. Other claimants did not feel this was necessary and that by providing such information to 'the government' they had already consented to this and that they 'had nothing to hide'.

Appendices

Methodology

Methodological discussion

Participants' data was collected when they telephoned the helplines in both the pilot and control areas. Participants were then sent a letter to alert them to the research and allowing them to opt out if they wished. A sample of those who did not opt out were then contacted for recruitment purposes.

Quotas were built into the recruitment process in order to achieve an even spread of interviews across different variables, and Ipsos MORI kept as close to these as was possible.

The opt-out letter, recruitment materials, discussion guide and stimulus materials can all be found in the Appendices.

Fieldwork amongst the pilot sample took place in between 18th February and 2nd July 2008, with the majority of interviews conducted fairly early on in this period. Fieldwork amongst the control sample took place in between 18th February and 29th May 2008.

Methodological points

As this research is qualitative, the claimants interviewed may not be fully representative of the wider populations of the pilot and control samples. Qualitative research explores the reasons behind participants' views and experiences; it does not seek to demonstrate how common opinions are. Any numerical references used are indicative only and should not be taken as evidence of how proportionate an experience or view is to a population.

There were a number of participant recall issues due to the length of time between the call to the helpline(s) and the interview.

The expected trust issues following the loss of two data discs in late 2007 did not explicitly manifest themselves in the interviews to a great extent. Claimants tended not to mention this issue directly, although perhaps it may have indirectly informed some of their views.

The sample

50 in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face with ChB and CTC claimants by Ipsos MORI executives and directors, including:

- 25 with the pilot group
 - 13 who contacted the ChB helpline
 - 12 who contacted the CTC helpline
- 25 with the control group
 - 7 who contacted the ChB helpline first
 - 7 who contacted the ChB helpline only
 - 11 who contacted the CTC helpline first

These interviews contained a broad mix of those calling to report the birth of a first child (new parents), and those calling to report the birth of a second or subsequent child (existing parents), including single parents and couples.

We also achieved a spread of interviews with individuals from a range of different backgrounds, including gender, social grade, age and ethnicity, and interviews were conducted across the UK. Some participants were also claiming other benefits, such as Working Tax Credits (WTC), Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance.

Topic Guide

Claimants' experience of aligned tax credit and child benefit services

Depth interview discussion guide - New Births Project

FINAL version – 15/02/08

Core objectives

To explore the experiences of those who have recently contacted the Child Benefit or Tax Credits Office to report a new birth. The aim is to explore their experiences in relation to their tax credits and child benefit claims and collect comparative data on the pilot and control groups' experiences of the process they have been through.

In particular

- Claimants' overall experience of the route they went through;
- The advantages of the approach and how it could be improved;
- Their understanding of the information they were given and whether they required further information;
- Their overall impression of the staff they dealt with and the extent to which they were happy with the communication channels available;
- Their views on the alternative approach which they did not experience and how they think this compares with their own experience.

Specifically, HMRC is keen to explore the extent to which both control and pilot claimants were aware of the need to report a change to both systems and whether they had contacted or intended to contact both or just one of the helplines. Additionally, the extent to which claimants want to see an aligned service extended to other changes of circumstance.

The research will also explore claimants' views of the concept, whereby claimants will only be required to notify one government department of key changes such as births or deaths. The government department they inform will then be responsible for informing all other government departments.

For the pilot group:

- The extent to which pilot claimants had been aware of the need to report a change to both systems.
- How effectively the pilot approach met their needs at this time, and how this process might be improved further in the future.

For the control group:

- The extent to which claimants were aware of the need to report a change to both systems and whether they contacted or intended to contact one or both helplines;
- For those who only notified one system, reasons for notifying that system and not the other;
- For claimants delaying notification of the other system after having contacted one system, reasons for the delay;

- How effectively the control approach met their needs at this time, and how this process might be improved further in the future.

Outline of the research programme

- 50 in-depth interviews to be conducted face-to-face by Ipsos MORI executives and directors, including
 - 25 with the pilot group:
 - c12 having contacted the Child Benefit and c12 having contacted the Tax Credits helpline;
 - even spread across the sample of those calling to report the birth of their first child and those calling to report the birth of a second/subsequent child.
 - 25 with the control group:
 - c6 having contacted the Child Benefit helpline first and c6 contacting Child Benefit helpline only;
 - c12 having contacted Child Tax Credit helpline first (none will have contacted just CTC helpline; it is unusual for claimants to claim just child tax credits and not child benefit; claimants who did this will have been excluded from the research as there is a risk that their claims could be fraudulent);
 - even spread across the sample of those calling to report the birth of their first child and those calling to report the birth of a second/subsequent child.
- Flexible quotas set on social grade, gender, ethnicity and age to be closely monitored throughout recruitment.
- Fieldwork dates –
 - Pilot: 18th February – 16th March
 - Control: TBC
 - Control: late callers: TBC

Interview sections	Notes	Approx timing
1. Introduction and background	Sets the scene and gets background information on participants including brief details about the child/other children in the household	10 mins
2. Detailed claim journey	Explores experiences of notifying HMRC of the birth of the new baby, including what prompted them to contact that particular helpline first (tax credits and/or child benefit helpline), what happened within the call	20 mins
3. Comparison of the two approaches	Looks at experiences of different types of interaction	13 mins
4. Future developments	Focuses on how to develop alignment processes in the future	7 mins
5. 'Tell Us Once'	Explore claimants' views of the wider concept of government organisations sharing information.	5 mins
6. Conclusion and key message	Draws out key messages and draws interview to a close	5 mins

Total		60 mins
Key Questions	Notes	Approx timing
1. Introduction and background		
<p>1.1 Scene-setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank interviewee for taking part • Introduce self, Ipsos MORI, HMRC and explain the aim of the interview • Role of Ipsos MORI – research organisation, gather all opinions: all opinions valid, disagreements OK • Reassure interviewees that everything they say to us is confidential, will not be passed to HMRC and will not affect their tax credits claim in any way. Important that the moderator stresses this to put the participant at ease. • Get permission to record interview – transcribe for quotes, no detailed attribution. <p>1.2 Introduction and background info:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First name, where do you live, who do you live with, what is your working status (n.b. many will currently be on maternity leave so ask what did they do before baby was born and what do they envisage they will be doing in next year or so) and working status of any partner claimant has? • How many children do you have? If other children, how old are they? What are their circumstances? (e.g. are they at school yet etc). • Are you receiving Child Benefit or Child Tax Credits? (n.b participants should be receiving one or both) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD – Were you already claiming Child Benefit or Child Tax Credits before you called to notify HMRC of your new birth? KEEP BRIEF, THIS WILL BE TOUCHED ON IN MORE DETAIL LATER. • What is your experience of receiving government benefits generally and how long have you received them, eg: Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit, Child Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit. • Who deals/helps with the tax credit/child benefit claim – why is this, what is your/their general approach to finances 	Put the participant at ease and introduce the purpose of the interview. Elicit some background information on the respondent to help analyse their responses by.	10 mins

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How easy is it for you at the moment to deal with things like this? Do other demands on your time affect the amount of attention you can pay to this kind of issue – or is it manageable? 		
2. Detailed claim journey		20 mins
<p><u>Background to the call(s) that claimants made to the tax credits and/or child benefit helpline.</u></p> <p>READ OUT: What we're really interested in finding out is the actual processes (or journey) you went through when notifying HMRC of the birth of your child, and making your claim for Child Benefit/Child Tax Credit.</p> <p>As there might be a lot of detail here (e.g. various phone calls, letters), please could you tell me what has happened over time and break things down stage by stage, so that I have a clear idea of what's happened with your claims and when. Does that sound OK? Please tell me everything that you remember that happened, in relation to your claim in your own words.</p> <p>WITH ALL PARTICIPANTS: Complete a 'time journey' sheet, showing key milestones that have marked their claiming history.</p> <p>Check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What prompted you to make the claim, how did you know that you could or should to make a claim for child benefit and/or tax credits? IF LIVE WITH PARTNER (<i>and not already asked earlier</i>): Who dealt with the claim in your household and why? Have you claimed child tax credit or child benefit before at all? IF YES, How has that experience been (briefly)? PROBE FOR ANY SPECIFIC PROBLEMS IF CLAIMED TAX CREDITS BEFORE - Did you know generally what types of changes in your circumstances you have to report to HMRC? (Ensuring that respondents don't go into too much detail about the circumstances they need to report) IF CLAIMED TAX CREDITS BEFORE – Did you know that you need to notify Tax Credits if you have a new baby? How soon did you think you had to let HMRC know about the birth of your new baby in order to put in a claim for child tax credits or child benefit? Why did you think this? Explore whether claimants' understand that Child Benefit and Tax Credits are administered by the same organisation (HM Revenue and Customs). If they do understand this, where 	<p>This section explores claimants' experiences in greater depth, probing the reasons for their decision making process/behaviour.</p> <p>Additionally, we will explore claimants' awareness of the need to report changes of circumstance (such as the birth of a new baby) to the Child Tax Credits system and Child Benefit system and how they became aware of this.</p> <p>Use of a 'time journey' exercise here will enable us to map out events in participants' lives that may have influenced their tax credit status, and discover the processes they went through when notifying HMRC of the birth of their new baby.</p> <p>The interviews will build up detailed case studies. These will be used to exemplify the findings of this project.</p>	

<p>does this understanding come from (eg HMRC documents / letters?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which helpline(s) did you call? Did you contact Child Tax Credits and Child Benefits or just one? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you call that one/those ones? PROBE FOR ANY TRIED TO CALL BUT WASN'T SUCCESSFUL + WHY • IF CALLED TC FIRST: Why did you call the tax credits helpline first? PROBE BUT DO NOT PROMPT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whether called tax credits helpline first because they already had a copy of the child benefit form from another source such as the bounty pack given out at the hospital. - Whether called tax credits helpline first because they understood HMRC processes and knew that updating the tax credits system is quicker than asking / completing a child benefit form. - IF PILOT CLAIMANT AND WERE NOT ALREADY CLAIMING TAX CREDITS: What was your reaction to being told about tax credits? Did you think this was a good way of getting you to claim tax credits? • Have you received any letters from HMRC about your (new) claims for child tax credits or child benefit? When did you get those? PROBE ANY PROBLEMS WITH LETTERS FROM HMRC • Had you already received a child benefit form in a bounty pack given out at the hospital? • Have you had any issues or problems around either of your claims (especially if this relates to the process of making a claim)? PROBE: PROBLEMS AROUND THE APPLICATION PROCESS, SUBMITTING DUPLICATE FORMS) • What is the current status of your child benefit and/or tax credits claim(s)? (PROBE WHETHER THEY HAVE RECEIVED AN AWARD NOTICE FOR CTC OR CB, WHEN RECEIVED THE LETTER(S), WHAT THEY'VE DONE WITH IT/THEM, WHETHER THEY HAVE SENT BACK, WHETHER ANY DOCUMENTATION HAS BEEN SENT OFF AND PAYMENTS (ARE THEY CURRENTLY RECEIVING PAYMENTS?)) • PILOT CLAIMANTS: The standard process of 	<p>This section explores participants' experiences in greater depth probing their reasons for their decision making process/behaviour.</p>	
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applying for CTC and CB for a new baby – involved contacting each helpline separately – were you surprised that you could deal with both claims in one phone call? Did you know that you were taking part in a pilot scheme combining Child Benefit and Tax Credits processes?

AFTER HAVING GAINED THE BACKGROUND TIMELINE, PROBE EACH ELEMENT IN MORE DETAIL

Reporting the change

So just to recap on some of the details....

- What prompted you to report the birth of your new baby to HMRC? What was it that made you realise you needed to report it? PROBE: ANOTHER ORGANISATION SUCH AS JOBCENTRE PLUS, OTHER PEOPLE SUCH AS A HEALTH VISITOR, VIA A 'BOUNTY PACK' RECEIVED AT THE HOSPITAL, KNOWLEDGE FROM HAVING KIDS PREVIOUSLY, FRIENDS OR FAMILY, HMRC INFORMATION SUCH AS CHILD BENEFIT LETTER, LEAFLETS AT MOTHERCARE, ADVERTS ON TV, RADIO OR IN MAGAZINES, ANY OTHER SOURCES
- **FOR THOSE IN THE CONTROL GROUP WHO CALLED BOTH HELPLINES:** why did you call one helpline/report the change to one system first (i.e. ahead of another) – what was the reason for this? Were you aware of the need to report the birth to other departments? What made you aware of this?
 - Why did you call the other helpline afterwards (i.e. second)? How long did you leave between calling the first and the second helpline – why was this? What was the reason for waiting so long between the calls? PROBE REASONS FOR ANY DELAY: E.G. FORGOT, DIDN'T GET ROUND TO IT, CONCERNS ABOUT REPORTING, DIDN'T WANT TO FILL IN FORMS/ GO THROUGH FORMAL NOTIFICATION PROCESS, UNAWARE ELIGIBLE FOR OTHER BENEFIT. How could you have been encouraged/ enabled to contact the other helpline more quickly?
 - IF NO/ LITTLE DELAY: Why did you call the two helplines in fairly quick succession?
- **FOR THOSE IN THE CONTROL GROUP WHO CALLED ONE HELPLINE (i.e. Child Benefit only):** why did you only contact the child benefit helpline? Did you think about contacting the tax credits helpline – IF NOT, why not? PROBE REASONS SUCH AS: FORGOT, DIDN'T GET ROUND TO IT, CONCERNS ABOUT

NOTE: Some pilot claimants may have called both helplines to 'check' that both systems had been updated (even though there was no need for them to call both systems). This section probes their reasons for doing this.

<p>REPORTING, DIDN'T WANT TO FILL IN FORMS/ GO THROUGH FORMAL NOTIFICATION PROCESSES, UNAWARE COULD CLAIM CHILD TAX CREDITS, THOUGHT WOULD NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR TAX CREDITS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you aware of the need to report the birth to the tax credits helpline if you wanted to claim this benefit (CTC)? How could it have been made clearer to you that you needed to contact both? • FOR THOSE IN THE PILOT: why did you choose notify X helpline about your new baby's birth? Why did you approach them rather than Y? PROBE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS WAS A CONSCIOUS DECISION OR NOT (E.G. JUST HAPPENED TO HAVE ONE NUMBER TO HAND) • FOR THOSE IN THE PILOT GROUP WHO CALLED BOTH HELPLINES: why did you call both? Probe awareness of the reason for the pilot, ie the extent to which claimant understood the fact that there was no need to call both helplines. Probe why they called both – ie were they being extra cautious? If they were unaware of the need only to call one, probe how it could have been made clearer that it was only necessary to call one. If they were being cautious, probe how they could have been persuaded of the need only to call one helpline. • FOR THOSE WHO HAVE CLAIMED OTHER BENEFITS: Have you ever reported changes in circumstance for any of your other benefit(s)? IF YES: what events prompted these, and how long after the event did you report the change in circumstance? IF THEY USED A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO THAT IN THIS CASE: why was this instance different? <p><u>Experience of the notification of the new birth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which communication channels did you use to notify HMRC of the birth of your new baby? Specifically, did you phone them yourself, from home (PROBE LANDLINE OR MOBILE) or did you use other free phonelines, eg in an HMRC Enquiry Centre (These are centres where people can go to either to talk to an advisor face to face or use the free phonelines there to contact the relevant HMRC helplines)? PROBE BRIEFLY ANY ISSUES HERE • What was your experience of the call overall? • What was your impression of the staff that you dealt with – what were they like, how helpful were they, what did they say to you? Did the helpline advisor you spoke to give you not 		
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<p>enough/ too much/ the right amount of information to help you make your new child benefit and/or tax credits claim(s)? What information did you not need – or what did you want to know but were not told? Could they have been better in any way, if so, how?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were you able to give all your information over the phone straight away, or did you need to call back? How did you feel about giving this information over the phone? Were there any bits of information that were especially easy or difficult for you to provide? Which ones – why was it difficult to tell HMRC that? • What information were you given? What was your understanding of this? What did you think you needed to do as a result of the phone call? • How useful was the information you received during the phone call? Did you require any further information – if so, what was it? Did they tell you anything that surprised you or ask for information that you were not expecting? What else, if anything, would have been useful or more effective? Could this have been improved in any way? <p>Specifically focusing on what happened afterwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened after the phone call(s) where you notified HMRC of the birth of the new baby? Did you receive anything further from HMRC? PROBE TAX CREDITS/ CHILD BENEFIT CLAIM FORM(S) AND/OR AWARD NOTICE • Were you aware that you needed to provide the original copy of the baby's birth certificate when making a new claim for child benefit? Did this pose any problems for you? If so, how? • BOTH PILOT AND CONTROL - IF RECEIVED TWO CLAIM FORMS (ONE FOR TAX CREDITS AND ONE FOR CHILD BENEFIT): How did you feel about having to complete two separate claim forms (one for tax credits and one for child benefit)? Did you complete them both at the same time or did you complete one form some time before the other? • IF COMPLETED ONE FORM SOME TIME BEFORE THE OTHER: Which form did you complete first – the tax credits form or the child benefit form? Why did you complete that one first? PROBE: Was it because you found that form easier to complete? Were there any other reasons why you completed that form first? • How did you feel about any further letters or other contact you had with HMRC? Did you feel that you knew enough about the status of your 	<p>Note: following the call, claimants should have been sent two separate claim forms: one for child tax credits and one for child benefit. Only after completing and returning the forms (the child benefit form must be sent with the original copy of the child's birth certificate) will they have been sent an Award Notice.</p> <p>Note: The child benefit form must be posted (Freepost) with the child benefit claim form to the Child Benefit Office in Washington.</p> <p>Note: all claimants (both pilot and control) will receive two separate claim forms: one for child benefit and one for tax credits. This is because the process of claiming has not been aligned (only the process of notifying HMRC of the birth of the new baby has been aligned).</p> <p>Please avoid being drawn into a detailed discussion about the claim form(s). If necessary, reassure claimants that this research is part of a wider programme of research in which any difficulties that claimants experience completing their claim forms will be explored.</p>	
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claim? Did you want to know more? What else did you want to find out? Were there any outstanding issues or responsibilities to deal with once you had informed HMRC of the new birth? How satisfied were you with the way this was handled (if relevant)?

The overall process

- What did you think about the overall experience of the process (aligned or separate) you went through? What were its advantages/disadvantages? INTERVIEWER – REFER BACK TO PROMPT CARDS IF NECESSARY
- Were there any parts of notifying HMRC of the birth of your new baby that you found easier or more difficult than others? Which ones?
- Are there any parts of this process that you think could have worked better? IF YES: which ones, and how could they be improved? What impact would this have on you – and on other people?
- How does making this/ these claims for benefit fit with other priorities you have at the moment? Is there anything else that would have made it easier for you to notify HMRC of the new birth? IF YES: what would have made it easier? Why do you say that?
- To what extent do you feel that HMRC supported you during the process of notifying them of the birth of your new baby? Why do you say that? Is there anything else that HMRC could have done that would have made you feel more supported?
- How, if at all could this process be improved in the future? What would make things easier for you – or make the process run smoother?
- How do you feel about the communication channels on offer, such as the tax credits helpline – could they be improved at all, would you prefer to report changes through any other channels? PROBE e.g. via the internet?
- How would you feel about claiming tax credits and/or child benefit or contacting HMRC to notify them of changes of circumstances, such as the birth of a new baby, via the internet? How would this compare with doing this via the telephone or through the post? What would be the pros and cons for you? To what extent would it vary

according to what you wanted to do (i.e. claim versus notify of changes of circumstances)? Do you think that HMRC should offer this service – why/why not?		
3. Comparison of the two approaches		10 mins
<p>Introduce the alternative approach to the individual – i.e. if control, let them know that some people have gone through a 'pilot' phase whereby they only need contact HMRC once to notify a birth and apply for child benefit and child tax credits (the helpline will handle both tax credits and child benefit claims in the one phonecall, rather than the individual having to contact the two systems separately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine you had called HMRC again – for example, because you had another new baby. How do you think the alternative approach would have changed your experience of notifying HMRC of the birth of your new baby – if so, in what way, and at which stages of the process? Do you think this would have made it any easier or more difficult for you to notify them of the birth of your new baby, or would it have made no difference? IF EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT: Why do you say that? • FOR THOSE IN THE CONTROL GROUP: specifically how do you feel about the ('aligned') pilot process? What are the pros and cons of this compared to your experience? How would your experience have been improved, if at all, if you had gone through the pilot system? Why? • FOR THOSE IN THE PILOT GROUP: how do you feel about the standard, 'non-aligned', process? What are the comparative advantages/ and disadvantages of calling the helplines separately, rather than dealing with it all in one phone call? What are your reasons for saying this? <p>ASK ALL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So overall, would you prefer to use an aligned (pilot) process or a non-aligned (standard) process in future? Why do you say that? • Could the 'aligned' pilot process be improved further – if so, how? What would you change or do differently? 	<p>Using prompt cards here will aid comparison of the processes they went through when making their new claim, as well as making it easy to grasp how the process they did not experience would work. Card A shows the standard ('non-aligned') process that the control group will have experienced, while Card B shows the pilot ('aligned') process that the pilot group will have experienced. PLEASE NOTE: The last stage shown on Card B (where HMRC sends claimants the TC forms and ChB forms) is not aligned – only the process of notifying HMRC of the birth (i.e. telephoning either the TC or ChB helpline) has been aligned.</p>	
4. Future developments		7 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, what does it mean for you knowing that an aligned system exists for notifying the tax credits and child benefit systems of the birth of a new baby? How do you think you'd feel if, for example, you'd been experiencing the pilot scheme and it was changed back next year? 	<p>This section of the interview focuses on how knowledge of the alignment process changes expectations for future processes and what the limits of these might be.</p>	

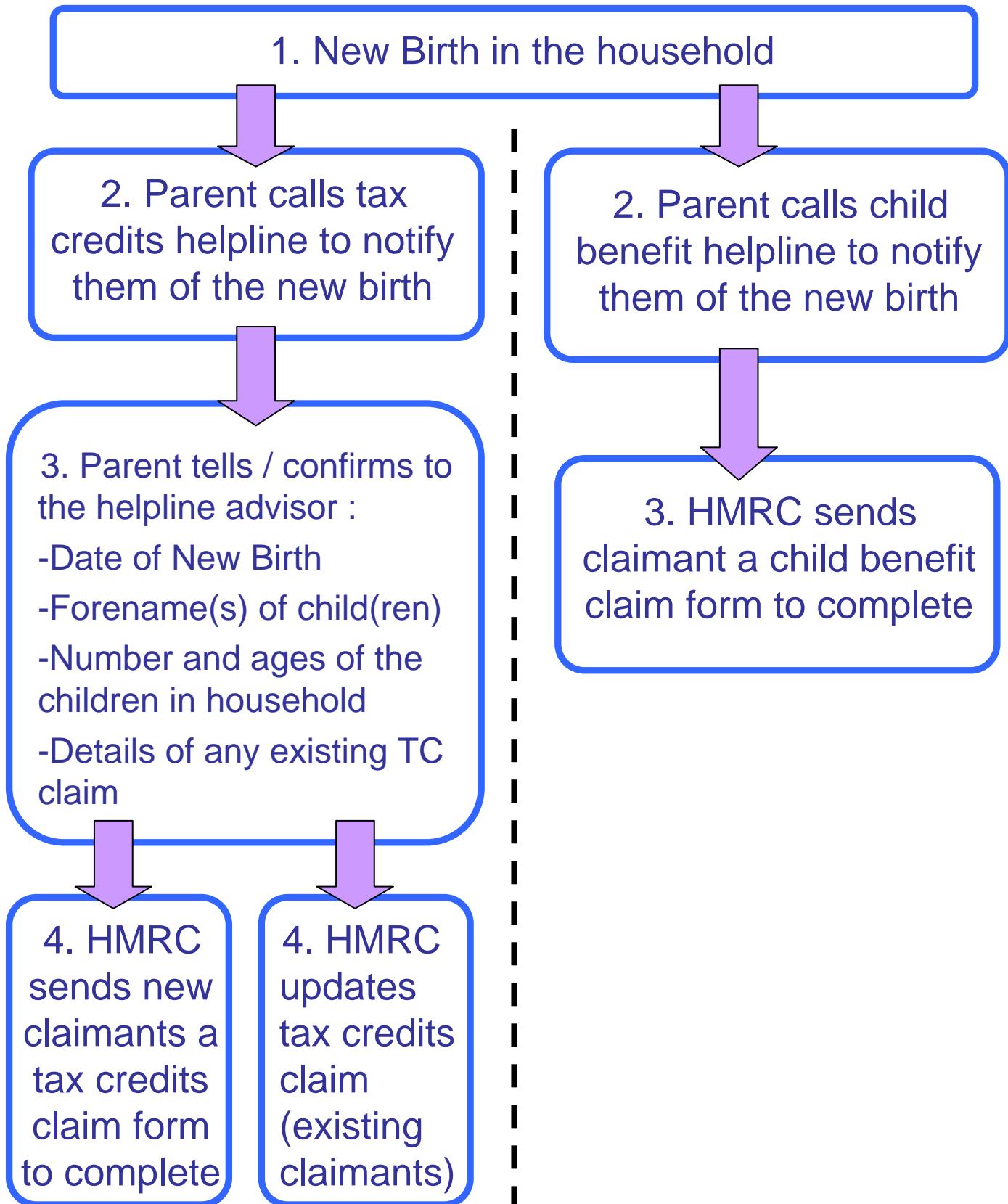
<p>PILOT: How would you feel if the systems were no longer aligned next time you got in touch with HMRC – would that be confusing or would you just accept the situation as it was?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might it help or hinder your application for these benefits? • What are the benefits of having an aligned approach? Are there any disadvantages? Are there any circumstances in which this is inappropriate? What should the limits be around sharing this kind of personal information with other tax credits or benefits teams within HM Revenue and Customs? What, if any, concerns would you have? • Would you like to see the child tax credits and child benefit systems aligned further? If so, how? PROBE FOR: alignment of communications (letters etc), claim forms, award notices. • Does this raise your expectations around the extent to which other benefit processes can be aligned? For example, if you received other benefits, would it make you think that this aligned approach should be extended to other benefits – why do you think this? INTERVIEWER: Check whether claimant is referring to benefits/credits administered by HMRC and/or those administered by other government organisations (e.g. DWP). • Overall, how do you feel about communication channels regarding child tax credits and child benefit? Could these be further developed in any way? PROBE FOR ANY DIFFERENCES IN INFO WOULD LIKE FOR FIRST CHILD AND THAT NEEDED FOR SUBSEQUENT BIRTHS Ideally, how would you want to get information about child tax credit and child benefit? What would this mean for you if you could get it this way? 	<p>Future contact with HMRC around CTC and CB many need to happen separately, rather than be aligned</p>	
<p>5. 'Tell Us Once'</p> <p>Moving on to thinking about the idea of aligning government services more generally now.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you aware of any other government organisations or other public sector organisations that you need to tell when you have a new baby? PROBE – BUT DO NOT PROMPT – FOR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local council (regarding Council Tax) • Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for other benefits. • Currently, when you have a new baby, you have to take responsibility for letting all the government 		8 mins or longer if time allows

<p>organisations know about the birth, because government organisations tend not to share such information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you feel if you could tell one government organisation about the birth of a new baby, and then that organisation took responsibility for telling all the other government organisations that needed to know? PROBE: How do you think this could help you? Why do you say that? • If you told HM Revenue and Customs, who administer Child Benefit and Tax Credits, about the birth of a new baby, which other government organisations would you like HMRC to inform on your behalf? • Do you have any concerns about government organisations sharing information about the birth of a new baby? PROBE: If so, what are your concerns? How do you think the government could overcome your concerns? • And in addition to reporting the birth of a new baby, how would you feel if you could report other changes of circumstance to one government organisation, and then that organisation informed other government organisations that needed to know? • And leaving aside reporting the birth of a new baby, which other changes of circumstance would you like to be able to tell one government organisation about, and then have that government tell all other government organisations that needed to know? PROBE: Are there any other changes of circumstance you would like to include? Any others? • How do you think being able to tell 1 government organisation in this way would help you? • And would you have any concerns about government organisations sharing information in this way? PROBE: If so, what are your concerns? How do you think the government could overcome your concerns? • Are there any particular kinds of information about you which you would not want government organisations to share? PROBE: If yes, what kinds of information? Why do you say that? • And which kinds of information would you be happy for government organisations to share? PROBE FULLY. Why do you say that? • So overall, why do you feel it's ok for government organisations to share information about [REPEAT RESPONSES] but not ok for government organisations to share information about [REPEAT RESPONSES]? 	<p>Please probe but DO NOT prompt for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting a death, • Change of address, • A change of benefit/employment status <p>If necessary, explain that 'changes in circumstances' are important changes or events in someone's life, but please avoid prompting claimants with examples.</p>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you like to be able to report changes? PROBE: in writing, over the telephone, via the internet, in person? Why do you say that? Do you think government organisations should ask you for your consent before sharing information you give them with other government organisations? PROBE: Why do you say that? Do you think they should always ask for your consent, or only sometimes? [If sometimes], in what instances do you think it would be ok for government organisations to share information without your consent? Why do you say that? 		
6. Conclusion and key messages		5 mins
<p>Finally, just to conclude, can you summarise for me what you think about the process of notifying HMRC about the birth of your new baby?</p> <p><i>Prompt where necessary:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the process you went through meet your needs at the time? Could your experience have been improved – if so, how? What does the aligned process of claiming child tax credits and child benefit add to the current process? How does it improve it, if at all? IF CONTROL: Would you prefer to have gone through this system? Why? IF PILOT: Would you prefer to have used the standard system of making claims separately? Why? Are there any key messages you would like us to feed back to HMRC? <p>Thank interviewee, explain the next steps (e.g. what HMRC will do with the findings) and close.</p>	<p>Formally ends the interview and provides reassurance that the findings will be both appreciated by and useful to HMRC.</p>	

Stimulus Material

Card A: Standard separate processes



Card B: Pilot 'aligned' process

1. New birth in the household

2. Parent calls either tax credits helpline or child benefit helpline to notify that system of the birth of the new baby

3. Helpline advisor offers to send out a child benefit claim form.

If the parent already claims tax credits, the helpline advisor offers to update their tax credits claim.

Or, if the parent does **not** already claim tax credits, the helpline advisor offers to send out a tax credits claim form.

If claiming tax credits, parent tells/ confirms to the helpline advisor:

- Date of New Birth
- Number and ages of the children in household
- Details of any existing TC claims.

4. HMRC sends new claimants a tax credits claim form to complete

4. HMRC updates tax credits claim (existing claimants)

4. HMRC sends claimant a child benefit claim form to complete

Advance Letter – Pilot



HM Revenue & Customs
Tax Credits
Room 2E/09
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Tel 020 7147 3371
Internet site www.hmrc.gov.uk

<<Title Forename Surname>>

<<Add 1>>

<<Add 2>>

<<Add 3>>

<<Add 4>>

<<Add 5>>

<<POSTCODE>>

Date 28th January 2008

Our Ref <<SERIAL NUMBER>>

Dear <<Title Surname>>

Research to explore people's experiences of the Child Benefit and Tax Credits system

I am writing to ask for your help with an important piece of research. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)¹, the government department responsible for Child Benefits and Tax Credits, is currently conducting research to explore people's views and experiences of letting HMRC know about the birth of a new baby. By understanding our customers' needs, we will aim to provide a high quality service and ensure that people are receiving the service and support that they are entitled to.

You have been selected from HMRC's records as someone who might be eligible to take part in this research. **Please be assured that any information you give as part of this study will be treated as confidential** in accordance with the Data Protection Act. To ensure this confidentiality, we have asked Ipsos MORI, an independent research organisation, to carry out this study for us. Ipsos MORI are completely independent of government and political parties. Your name and other personal details will not be quoted in any research findings. The information you give during the interview will only be held by Ipsos MORI and will be destroyed two months after the research findings have been prepared.

Ipsos MORI **may** contact you in the next few weeks to ask whether you would be willing to take part in this research and to arrange a suitable time for an interview. Please note that not everyone who receives this letter will be asked to take part in an interview. If you do take part, the interview will be conducted 'face-to-face' in your home or at a location convenient to you and you will receive £35 cash as a thank you for your time.

If you **do not want to take part**, please let Ipsos MORI know before 8th February 2008, either by:

- **Completing the slip at the bottom of the next page** and sending it back in the enclosed postage-paid envelope (you do not need to use a stamp); or
- **Calling Daniel Cameron at Ipsos MORI on freephone number** 0808 238 5427 and giving him your name and the reference number shown in the top left hand corner above.

Whatever you decide, any claim to Child Tax Credits and/or Child Benefit you may receive will not be affected in any way, either now or in the future. If you have any questions about the research, Ipsos MORI will be happy to answer them when they contact you. If you wish to confirm that this is a genuine research study, please contact me, Ben Savage, on 020 7147 3371.

Yours sincerely

Ben Savage

Senior Research Officer, HM Revenue & Customs

¹ The department formed by the merger of the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise in April 2005.

If you do not wish to be considered for this study, please cut out and return this slip (using the Freepost envelope provided) to: Daniel Cameron, FREEPOST WC 3163, Ipsos MORI, 77–81 Borough Road, London, SE1 1FY.

Please note that I would prefer not to be contacted about participating in this study.

Name (please print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Our ref: << SERIAL NUMBER>>

Advance Letter – Control



HM Revenue & Customs
Tax Credits
Room 2E/09
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Tel 020 7147 3371
Internet site www.hmrc.gov.uk

<<Title Forename Surname>>

<<Add 1>>

<<Add 2>>

<<Add 3>>

<<Add 4>>

<<Add 5>>

<<POSTCODE>>

Date 03 March 2008

Our Ref <<SERIAL NUMBER>>

Dear <<Title Surname>>

Research to explore people's experiences of the Child Benefit and Tax Credits system

I am writing to ask for your help with an important piece of research. HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)¹, the government department responsible for Child Benefits and Tax Credits, is currently conducting research to explore people's views and experiences of letting HMRC know about the birth of a new baby. By understanding our customers' needs, we will aim to provide a high quality service and ensure that people are receiving the service and support that they are entitled to.

You have been selected from HMRC's records as someone who might be eligible to take part in this research. **Please be assured that any information you give as part of this study will be treated as confidential** in accordance with the Data Protection Act. To ensure this confidentiality, we have asked Ipsos MORI, an independent research organisation, to carry out this study for us. Ipsos MORI are completely independent of government and political parties. Your name and other personal details will not be quoted in any research findings. The information you give during the interview will only be held by Ipsos MORI and will be destroyed two months after the research findings have been prepared.

Ipsos MORI **may** contact you in the next few weeks to ask whether you would be willing to take part in this research and to arrange a suitable time for an interview. Please note that not everyone who receives this letter will be asked to take part in an interview. If you do take part, the interview will be conducted 'face-to-face' in your home or at a location convenient to you and you will receive £35 cash as a thank you for your time.

If you **do not want to take part**, please let Ipsos MORI know before 14th March 2008, either by:

- **Completing the slip at the bottom of the next page** and sending it back in the enclosed postage-paid envelope (you do not need to use a stamp); or
- **Calling Daniel Cameron at Ipsos MORI on freephone number** 0808 238 5427 and giving him your name and the reference number shown in the top left hand corner above.

Whatever you decide, any claim to Child Tax Credits and/or Child Benefit you may receive will not be affected in any way, either now or in the future. If you have any questions about the research, Ipsos MORI will be happy to answer them when they contact you. If you wish to confirm that this is a genuine research study, please contact me, Ben Savage, on 020 7147 3371.

Yours sincerely

Ben Savage

Senior Research Officer, HM Revenue & Customs

¹ The department formed by the merger of the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise in April 2005.

If you do not wish to be considered for this study, please cut out and return this slip (using the Freepost envelope provided) to: Daniel Cameron, FREEPOST WC 3163, Ipsos MORI, 77–81 Borough Road, London, SE1 1FY.

Please note that I would prefer not to be contacted about participating in this study.

Name (please print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Our ref: << SERIAL NUMBER>>

Recruitment Materials – Pilot

Experience of Claiming Tax Credits and Child Benefit

New Births Project – Pilot Phase

Ipsos MORI/J31607

RESPONDENT RECRUITED
FOR:
DEPTH

RESPONDENT NO:

PILOT PHASE

Specification - This questionnaire recruits 25 people for face-to-face depth interviews. All of these should be taken from the pilot sample files. Quotas are detailed below.

Recruit 25

11th February – 14th March

- c12 contacting Child Benefit & c12 contacting Child Tax Credit helpline
- c12 calling to report the birth of their first child & c12 calling to report the birth of a second/subsequent child.

N.B Pilot claimants only need to establish contact with one helpline – either Child Benefit or Child Tax Credits (although some may have contacted both to be on safe side).

Secondary quotas:

Recruit participants in a range of different situations, in terms of:

- (Q5) working status of participant (not their partner)– FT/ PT/ not working
- (Q10b) length of CTC claim if not first child – over a year/ under a year
- (Q11) participant ethnicity
- (Q12) participant gender – try for at least 2 men
- (Q13) age
- (Q14) household socio-economic group

Good morning/afternoon/evening, My name is from Ipsos MORI, the opinion poll company.

You should have received a letter about some research we're currently conducting on behalf of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC - the government department responsible for the administration of Child Tax Credits and Child Benefit). The research will cover views and experiences of making a claim for Child Tax Credits and/or Child Benefit. This study will help the Department to understand people's views and experiences, and how the Department can improve the service it provides you with in the future.

We are looking to conduct an interview that will last about an hour and will take place in a location convenient to you, either your home or elsewhere.

We are looking for particular types of people; therefore I would like to ask you some questions about yourself. All information collected will be anonymised.

Should you be selected to take part in the interview, to say thank you for your time and cover any expenses incurred we would like to offer £35 cash.

NB. THE INCENTIVE OFFERED REPRESENTS COMPENSATION FOR THEIR TIME AND ANY CHILDCARE, IF APPROPRIATE (EXCEPT IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES).

Q1. Would you be interested in taking part?

SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes	1	CONTINUE TO Q2
No	2	CLOSE

Q2. Do you or any members of your immediate family work in any of the following areas, either in a paid or unpaid capacity?

MULTICODE OK

Journalism/the media	1	THANK AND CLOSE
Advertising	2	
Public relations (PR)	3	
Market Research	4	
HM Revenue & Customs	5	
No, none of these	6	
Don't know	7	

NOTE TO RECRUITER IF ANYONE FROM JOURNALISM/MEDIA QUERIES THEIR EXCLUSION:

It is Ipsos MORI's policy to exclude those who work in journalism and the media from certain research studies. Not only do these people tend to be more informed about the research process but, furthermore, due to their profession are also generally more aware of the kinds of issues we will be discussing. We therefore tend to exclude them from studies such as this, so as not to bias the results.

Q3. Have you participated in a focus group discussion or depth interview for a market research company in the last 12 months?

SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes	1	THANK AND CLOSE
No	2	CONTINUE TO Q4

- Q4. Do you currently or have you in the last year received or applied for Child Tax Credit or Child Benefit? SINGLE CODE ONLY

IF NECESSARY:

CHILD TAX CREDITS (CTC) IS A TAX CREDIT TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER 16 (19 IF STILL IN FULL TIME EDUCATION), PAID BY HM REVENUE AND CUSTOMS, FORMALLY KNOWN AS THE INLAND REVENUE.

CHILD BENEFIT (CB) IS A BENEFIT PAID TO ALL PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN ARE UNDER 16 (19 IF STILL IN FULL TIME EDUCATION), PAID BY HM REVENUE AND CUSTOMS, FORMALLY KNOWN AS THE INLAND REVENUE.

IF PARTICIPANT IS UNSURE WHICH THEY RECEIVE (CODE 4) TRY AND IDENTIFY WHETHER THEY RECEIVE ONE OR TWO PAYMENTS – IF TWO, USE CODE 1, IF ONE, CODE 4.

Both Child Tax Credits and Child Benefit	1	CONTINUE TO Q5
Child Benefit only	2	
Child Tax Credits only	3	
Not sure which receive – but know receive some Tax Credit/ Benefit to do with having a child	4	
Neither/ Refused	5	

THANK AND CLOSE

- Q5. How would you describe your current work status? QUESTION REFERS TO INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT, PRIOR TO GOING ON MATERNITY LEAVE IF APPLICABLE. PLEASE CODE WHETHER THIS WAS FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT. SINGLE CODE ONLY

Working full-time (30+ hours per week) - EMPLOYED	1	RECRUIT RANGE: FT/ PT/ NOT WORKING. CONTINUE TO Q6
Working full time (30+ hours per week) – SELF EMPLOYED	2	
Working part time (9-29 hours per week) – EMPLOYED	3	
Working part time (9-29 hours per week) – SELF EMPLOYED	4	
Not working - Unemployed – seeking work	5	
Not working – Unemployed – not seeking work	6	
Not working - invalid/disabled	7	
Not working - looking after house/children	8	
Retired	9	
Student	10	
Other, write in and code 11	11	

- Q6. **And can I just check, how many children do you have? IF NECESSARY, INDICATE THAT THIS MEANS ANY UNDER THE AGE OF 16 (OR UNDER 19 IF IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION OR TRAINING). SINGLE CODE ONLY**

One	1	
Two	2	
Three	3	
Four	4	
Five or more (WRITE IN HOW MANY CHILDREN):	5	TRY TO OBTAIN A SPREAD OF THOSE WITH ONE CHILD AND THOSE WITH MORE THAN ONE
None	6	
Don't know/ Don't want to say	7	THANK AND CLOSE

- Q7. **And what age is your child/ages are your children?**
MULTICODE OK

Less than 6 months	1	
6 months to a year	2	
1-2 years	3	
3-5 years	4	
6-8 years	5	
9-11 years	6	
12-14 years	7	
15-16 years	8	
17-19 years	9	
20+ years	10	IF NO CHILDREN UNDER A YEAR PLEASE THANK AND CLOSE
Don't know/ Don't want to say	11	THANK AND CLOSE

- Q8a **And have you reported any change in your family's personal circumstances (such as a new birth in the household) to HMRC in the past few months? This could be via a helpline, for example the Child Benefit or Tax Credits helplines.** SINGLE CODE ONLY
PLEASE REASSURE THE PARTICIPANT AT THIS STAGE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL – AND REASSURE THOSE THAT FEEL THEY PERHAPS SHOULD HAVE REPORTED A CHANGE AND HAVEN'T.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE RESEARCH AIMS TO UNDERSTAND REASONS FOR CONTACTING/NOT CONTACTING CERTAIN HELPLINES, SO PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TRY TO TELL RESPONDENTS WHICH THEY SHOULD HAVE CONTACTED.

WE DON'T EXPECT ANYONE TO HAVE CONTACTED BOTH HELPLINES, HOWEVER SOME MAY HAVE CALLED BOTH JUST TO BE EXTRA THOROUGH – ALTHOUGH THESE PEOPLE SHOULDN'T BE EXCLUDED, PLEASE MONITOR THIS & DO NOT RECRUIT MORE THAN FIVE WHO HAVE CALLED BOTH. PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE FOR ADVICE IF YOU ARE UNSURE.

Yes – Child Benefit helpline only	1	
Yes – Tax Credits helpline only	2	CONTINUE TO Q8B
Yes – both helplines	3	SEE NOTE ABOVE – DO NOT RECRUIT MORE THAN 5
No	4	
Don't know	5	THANK AND CLOSE

Q8b Do you remember where you made the call(s) to the helpline from?
MULTI CODE IF NECESSARY

From home landline phone	1
From your mobile phone	2
From HMRC Enquiry centre	3
Other (write in and code 4)	4
Don't know	5

Q9 And when you called HMRC to notify them of the birth, was this relating to your first child or to a second or subsequent child?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

First child	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA & ASK Q11
Second/Subsequent child	2	RECRUIT TO QUOTA & ASK Q10A.
Didn't call them for this reason	3	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK IF REPORTING BIRTH OF SECOND/ SUBSEQUENT CHILD (CODE 2) AT Q9

Q10a When you called to let HMRC know of the recent birth of your child(ren), were you already claiming Child Benefit (CB) or Child Tax Credits (CTC) at the time for your other child(ren)?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Child Benefit	1	ASK Q10C
Child Tax Credits	2	ASK Q10B
Both	3	ASK Q10B & CONTINUE TO Q10C
Neither	4	ASK Q11

ASK IF CODE '2' OR '3' AT Q10a

Q10b How long ago did you first claim Child Tax Credits?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Within the last 12 months	1	ASK 10C IF CLAIMING CHILD BENEFIT, OTHERWISE GO TO Q11
More than 12 months ago	2	

ASK IF CODE '1' OR '3' AT Q10a

Q10c How long ago did you first claim Child Benefit?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Within the last 12 months	1	CONTINUE TO Q11
More than 12 months ago	2	

ASK ALL

Q11. To which one of these groups do you consider you belong?

SINGLE CODE ONLY. QUESTION REFERS TO INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT, NOT WIDER FAMILY.

NB. INTERVIEWER ASK FIRSTLY ABOUT THE BROAD ETHNIC GROUP (COLUMN A) AND THEN ASK ABOUT COLUMN B

a)	b)	
WHITE	British	1
	Irish	2
	Any other white background	3
MIXED	White and Black Caribbean	4
	White and Asian	5
	Any other mixed background	6
ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITAIN	Indian	7
	Pakistani	8
	Bangladeshi	9
	Any other Asian background	10
BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH	Caribbean	11
	African	12
	Any other black background	13
CHINESE OR OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	Chinese	14
	Any other background	15
	Refused	16

MONITOR (AIM FOR SPREAD IF POSSIBLE)

Q12. GENDER

WRITE IN, DO NOT ASK

Male	1	TRY TO RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 MEN IF POSSIBLE
Female	2	

Q13. And can I just ask, what was your age last birthday?

EXACT AGE

MONITOR (AIM FOR SPREAD IF POSSIBLE)

Q14. Occupation of Chief Income Earner

Position/rank/grade

Industry/type of company

Quals/degree/apprenticeship

Number of staff responsible for

**REMEMBER TO PROBE FULLY FOR
PENSION AND CODE FROM ABOVE**

Social Grade

A	1	AIM FOR SPREAD OF HOUSEHOLD SOCIAL GRADE. CONTINUE
B	2	
C1	3	
C2	4	
D	5	
E	6	

After the interview has been completed we would like to offer you £35 cash as a thank you for your time.
 Would you like to take part? THANK AND RECRUIT

If you wish to check that the research is genuine, please call Ben Savage at HMRC on 020 7147 3371

Interviewer number:

Interviewer name (CAPS):

I confirm that I have conducted this interview by telephone with the above person and that I asked all the relevant questions and recorded the answers in conformance with the survey specifications and with the MRS Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Interviewer Signature:

Date:

THIS MUST BE THE LAST PAGE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND MUST BE SINGLE SIDED

Experience of Claiming Tax Credits and Child Benefit New Births Project – Pilot Phase

RESPONDENT RECRUITED FOR: Depth
RESPONDENT NO:

PERSONAL IDENTIFIERS

Details	
Location:	Date:
Time:	

Name/Initial>Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss

Address:

PLEASE TRY TO COLLECT BOTH MOBILE & LANDLINE TELEPHONE NUMBERS IF POSSIBLE.

**Tel. Number (WRITE IN INCL.
STD code)**

Home	1
Mobile	2
Work	3
Refused/Ex-directory	4

e-mail address (WRITE IN)	1

**Is respondent willing to take part
and available?**

Yes	1
No	2

Respondent attended?

Yes	1
No	2

Recruitment Materials – Control

Experience of Claiming Tax Credits and Child Benefit

New Births Project – Control Phase

Ipsos MORI/J31607

RESPONDENT RECRUITED FOR: Depth
RESPONDENT NO:

CONTROL PHASE

Specification - This questionnaire recruits 21 people for face-to-face depth interviews. All of these should be taken from the control sample file.

Primary quotas are detailed below.

Recruit c21 overall

Note: claimants have been classified as 'New' or 'Existing' on the sample as a result of being new or existing Tax Credits claimants; whether they have claimed Child Benefit previously has not been taken into account. This classification should be used as a proxy for whether the child was their first or second/subsequent child - the recruitment script will clarify whether it actually was their first child or second/subsequent child. In cases where the sample and the claimant differ (e.g. where the sample says 'New' but the claimant says this is their second/third/fourth child), please fill the quota on the basis of what the claimant says (i.e. that the child was their first or second/subsequent child) rather than on the basis of the sample record, if they differ.

New (first child) / Existing (second/subsequent child)

- First child (New TC claimants) – recruit c.6 (2 who called both TC and ChB; 4 who called ChB only)
- Second / Subsequent child (Existing TC claimants) – recruit c.15

Which line called

- ChB only – recruit c.4
- Both - ChB first – recruit c.8
- Both - TC first – recruit c.9

When called second helpline

- Called both same day – recruit c.10
- Called different day but within 4 weeks – recruit c.8
- Called over 4 weeks later – recruit c.7

N.B Control claimants might have spoken to both helplines (Child Tax Credits & Child Benefit) or just have called one.

Secondary quota:

We will monitor the recruitment closely throughout the process, so that a range of different situations, in terms of working status, social grade, gender, ethnicity, age, length of CTC claim and current status of claim, are represented across the research.

Good morning/afternoon/evening, My name is from Ipsos MORI, the opinion poll company.

You should have received a letter about some research we're currently conducting on behalf of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC - the government department responsible for the administration of Child Tax Credits and Child Benefit). The research will cover views and experiences of making a claim for Child Tax Credit Child Benefit or both. This study will help the Department to understand people's views and experiences, and how the Department can improve the service it provides you with in the future.

We are looking to conduct an interview that will last about an hour and will take place in a location convenient to you, either your home or elsewhere.

We are looking for particular types of people; therefore I would like to ask you some questions about yourself. All information collected will be anonymised.

Should you be selected to take part in the interview, to say thank you for your time and cover any expenses incurred we would like to offer £35 cash.

NB. THE INCENTIVE OFFERED REPRESENTS COMPENSATION FOR THEIR TIME AND ANY CHILDCARE, IF APPROPRIATE.

Q1. Would you be interested in taking part?

SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes	1	CONTINUE TO Q2
No	2	CLOSE

Q2. Do you or any members of your immediate family work in any of the following areas, either in a paid or unpaid capacity?

MULTICODE OK

Journalism/the media	1	
Advertising	2	
Public relations (PR)	3	THANK AND CLOSE
Market Research	4	
HM Revenue & Customs	5	
No, none of these	6	
Don't know	7	CONTINUE TO Q3

NOTE TO RECRUITER IF ANYONE FROM JOURNALISM/MEDIA QUERIES THEIR EXCLUSION:

It is Ipsos MORI's policy to exclude those who work in journalism and the media from certain research studies. Not only do these people tend to be more informed about the research process but, furthermore, due to their profession are also generally more aware of the kinds of issues we will be discussing. We therefore tend to exclude them from studies such as this, so as not to bias the results.

Q3. Have you participated in a focus group discussion or depth interview for a market research company in the last 12 months?

SINGLE CODE ONLY

Yes	1	THANK AND CLOSE
No	2	CONTINUE TO Q4

Q4. Do you currently or have you in the last year received Child Tax Credit or Child Benefit?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

IF NECESSARY:

CHILD TAX CREDITS (CTC) IS A TAX CREDIT TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN UNDER 16 (19 IF STILL IN FULL TIME EDUCATION), PAID BY HM REVENUE AND CUSTOMS, FORMALLY KNOWN AS THE INLAND REVENUE.

CHILD BENEFIT (CB) IS A BENEFIT PAID TO ALL PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN ARE UNDER 16 (19 IF STILL IN FULL TIME EDUCATION), PAID BY HM REVENUE AND CUSTOMS, FORMALLY KNOWN AS THE INLAND REVENUE.

Both Child Tax Credits and Child Benefit	1	CONTINUE TO Q5
Child Benefit only	2	
Child Tax Credit only	3	THANK AND CLOSE
Not sure which receive – but know receive some Tax Credit/ Benefit to do with having a child	4	CONTINUE TO Q5
Neither/ Refused	5	THANK AND CLOSE

Q5. How would you describe your current work status? IF ON MATERNITY LEAVE, PLEASE CODE IF FROM FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT. SINGLE CODE ONLY

Working full-time (30+ hours per week) - EMPLOYED	1	
Working full time (30+ hours per week) – SELF EMPLOYED	2	
Working part time (9-29 hours per week) – EMPLOYED	3	
Working part time (9-29 hours per week) – SELF EMPLOYED	4	
Not working - Unemployed – seeking work	5	CONTINUE TO Q6
Not working - Unemployed - not seeking work	6	
Not working - invalid/disabled	7	
Not working - looking after house/children	8	
Retired	9	
Student	10	
Other, please specify	11	

- Q6. **And can I just check, how many children do you have? IF NECESSARY, INDICATE THAT THIS MEANS ANY UNDER THE AGE OF 16 (OR UNDER 20 IF IN FULLTIME EDUCATION OR TRAINING). SINGLE CODE ONLY**

One	1	CONTINUE TO Q7
Two	2	
Three	3	CONTINUE TO Q7
Four	4	
Five or more (WRITE IN HOW MANY CHILDREN):	5	TRY TO OBTAIN A SPREAD OF THOSE WITH ONE CHILD AND THOSE WITH MORE THAN ONE
None	6	
Don't know/ Don't want to say	7	THANK AND CLOSE

- Q7. **And what age is your child/ages are your children?**
MULTICODE OK

Less than 6 months	1	CONTINUE TO Q8A.
6 months to a year	2	
1-2 years	3	
3-5 years	4	
6-8 years	5	
9-11 years	6	
12-14 years	7	
15-16 years	8	
16-20 years	9	
20+ years	10	IF NO CHILDREN UNDER A YEAR PLEASE THANK AND CLOSE
Don't know/ Don't want to say	11	THANK AND CLOSE

- Q8a **And have you reported any change in your family's personal circumstances (such as a new birth in the household) to HMRC in the past few months? This could be via a helpline, for example the Child Benefit or Tax Credits helplines.**

SINGLE CODE ONLY

PLEASE REASSURE THE PARTICIPANT AT THIS STAGE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL – AND REASSURE THOSE THAT FEEL THEY PERHAPS SHOULD HAVE REPORTED A CHANGE AND HAVEN'T.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE RESEARCH AIMS TO UNDERSTAND REASONS FOR CONTACTING/NOT CONTACTING CERTAIN HELPLINES, SO PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TRY TO TELL RESPONDENTS WHICH THEY SHOULD HAVE CONTACTED.

Yes – Child Benefit helpline only	1	CONTINUE TO Q8D
Yes – both helplines	2	CONTINUE TO Q8B
No	3	
Don't know	4	THANK AND CLOSE

DO NOT ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTION, RECORD ONLY – PLEASE REFER TO THE SAMPLE DATA SUPPLIED

- Q8b **Which helpline did you call first?**

SINGLE CODE ONLY

Child benefit helpline	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA
Tax credits helpline	2	CONTINUE TO Q8C
Don't know/can't remember	3	

DO NOT ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTION, RECORD ONLY – PLEASE REFER TO THE SAMPLE DATA SUPPLIED

Q8c How long was the time lapse between contacting the first and second helpline?
SINGLE CODE ONLY.

Same day	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA CONTINUE TO Q8D
Different day, but less than 4 weeks	2	
4 – 8 weeks	3	
Don't know/ Refused		THANK AND CLOSE

ASK ALL

Q8d Do you remember where you made the call(s) to the helpline from?
MULTI CODE IF NECESSARY

From home landline phone	1	CONTINUE TO Q9
From your mobile phone	2	
From HMRC Enquiry centre	3	
Other (write in)	4	
Don't know	5	

Q9 And when you called HMRC to notify them of the birth, was this relating to your first child or to a second or subsequent child?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

First child	1	RECRUIT TO QUOTA & GO TO Q11
Second/Subsequent child	2	RECRUIT TO QUOTA & CONTINUE TO Q10A.
Didn't call them for this reason	3	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK IF REPORTING THE BIRTH OF SECOND/SUBSEQUENT CHILD (CODE 2) AT Q9

Q10a When you called to let HMRC know of the recent birth of your child(ren), were you claiming Child Benefit (CB) or Child Tax Credits (CTC) at the time?

Child Benefit	1	GO TO Q10C
Child Tax Credits	2	GO TO Q10B
Both	3	GO TO Q10B & CONTINUE TO Q10C
Neither	4	GO TO Q11

ASK IF CODE '2' or '3' AT Q10a

Q10b How long ago did you first claim Child Tax Credits?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Within the last 12 months	1	CONTINUE TO Q10C IF WAS CLAIMING CHILD BENEFIT, OTHERWISE GO TO Q11
More than 12 months ago	2	

ASK IF CODE '1' OR '3' AT Q10a

Q10c How long ago did you first claim Child Benefit?
SINGLE CODE ONLY

Within the last 12 months	1	CONTINUE TO Q11
More than 12 months ago	2	

ASK ALL

Q11. To which one of these groups do you consider you belong?

SINGLE CODE ONLY.

NB. INTERVIEWER ASK FIRSTLY ABOUT THE BROAD ETHNIC GROUP (COLUMN A) AND THEN ASK ABOUT COLUMN B)

a)	b)	
WHITE	British	1
	Irish	2
	Any other white background	3
MIXED	White and Black Caribbean	4
	White and Asian	5
	Any other mixed background	6
ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITAIN	Indian	7
	Pakistani	8
	Bangladeshi	9
	Any other Asian background	10
BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH	Caribbean	11
	African	12
	Any other black background	13
CHINESE OR OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	Chinese	14
	Any other background	15
	Refused	16

CONTINUE TO Q12

MONITOR (AIM FOR SPREAD
IF POSSIBLE)

Q12. GENDER

WRITE IN, DO NOT ASK

Male	1	CONTINUE TO Q13. TRY TO RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 MEN IF POSSIBLE
Female	2	

Q13. And can I just ask, what was your age last birthday?

EXACT AGE

CONTINUE TO Q14 + MONITOR
(AIM FOR SPREAD IF POSSIBLE)

Q14. Occupation of Chief Income Earner

Position/rank/grade

Industry/type of company

Quals/degree/apprenticeship

Number of staff responsible for

**REMEMBER TO PROBE FULLY FOR
PENSION AND CODE FROM ABOVE**

Social Grade

A	1	CONTINUE
B	2	
C1	3	
C2	4	
D	5	
E	6	

After the interview has been completed we would like to offer you £35 cash as a thank you for your time.
Would you like to take part? THANK AND RECRUIT

If you wish to check that the research is genuine, please call Ben Savage at HMRC on 020 7147 3371

Interviewer number:

Interviewer name (CAPS):

I confirm that I have conducted this interview by telephone with the above person and that I asked all the relevant questions and recorded the answers in conformance with the survey specifications and with the MRS Code of Conduct and the Data Protection Act 1998.

Interviewer Signature:

Date:

THIS MUST BE THE LAST PAGE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND MUST BE SINGLE SIDED

Ipsos MORI/ J31607

Experience of Claiming Tax Credits

RESPONDENT RECRUITED FOR: Depth

RESPONDENT NO:

PERSONAL IDENTIFIERS**Details**

Location:	Date:
Time:	

Name/Initial>Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss

Address:

PLEASE TRY TO COLLECT BOTH MOBILE & LANDLINE TELEPHONE NUMBERS IF POSSIBLE.

Tel. Number (WRITE IN INCL.**STD code)**

Home	1
Mobile	2
Work	3
Refused/Ex-directory	4

e-mail address (WRITE IN)

1

**Is respondent willing to take part
and available?**

Yes	1
No	2

Respondent attended?

Yes	1
No	2