Tax credits enquiry

The check

Every year we check thousands of tax credits awards to make sure that we:
• have awarded the right amount of tax credits based on customers’ income and circumstances
• are running the tax credits system fairly and efficiently.
If we check your previous tax credits award, it is known as an ‘enquiry’.

About your check

To help us get a picture of your household, we may ask you for things like bank statements, payslips, household bills and details of your income and circumstances. We can also ask employers and childcarers for information.
If we ask you for any original documents, including passports or other identity documents, we will return them to you securely. If we believe that any documents you send us are not genuine, we may keep them.

If we do not hear from you

You must tell us if you cannot give us the information or explain why there is a delay.
If you do not send us the information by the date on our letter, we can reduce or stop your tax credits. You may also have to pay a penalty.

Mistakes

We will not charge you a penalty if you:
• tell us about a relevant change in circumstances in time, see opposite
• take reasonable care to give us correct information on your claim. We will not charge a penalty if you took care with your claim, but still made a mistake.

Asking someone to help you

If you would like independent help, you can ask a friend, a professional adviser or an organisation like Citizens Advice to help you. You can also ask them to talk to us on your behalf, but we cannot talk to anyone without your permission.
If you do ask someone to help you, please write to us and tell us the:
• name and address of the person, or
• address and contact details of the organisation acting on your behalf.

Co-operation

The extent to which you co-operate and give us information is entirely up to you.
If you are not sure whether to give us the information, we suggest you get independent advice before deciding what to do. We may decide to reduce or stop your tax credits payments based on the information we hold.
Child Benefit
If you are claiming Child Benefit, any changes to your family circumstances may affect the amount you receive.

Your rights
You have the right to appeal if we:
• change your award
• ask you to pay a penalty, or
• charge interest on your overpayment.
We will tell you how to appeal in the letter we will send telling you what we have done.

Our leaflet WTC/AP What to do if you think our decision is wrong gives more information about how to appeal. If you want to get a copy online you can go to www.hmrc.gov.uk/leaflets/wtc_ap.pdf

Asking us to stop the check
You can ask us to stop our check into your previous tax credits award at any time. If we think we should continue with the check we will ask an independent tribunal to decide what should happen. The tribunal will tell us to stop unless we can convince them that we should be allowed to continue.

HM Revenue & Customs’ commitment
We aim to provide a high quality service with guidance that is simple, clear and accurate.
We will:
• be professional and helpful
• act with integrity and fairness
• treat your affairs in strict confidence within the law.
We aim to handle your affairs promptly and accurately so that you receive or pay only the right amount due.

Putting things right
If you are not satisfied with our service, please let us know what is wrong. We will work as quickly as possible to put things right and settle your complaint.
If you are still unhappy, ask for your complaint to be referred to the Complaints Manager.

Getting advice
You can get advice from a professional adviser or organisation. You can also ask Citizens Advice. You can find them in The Phone Book.

Customers with particular needs
We offer a range of facilities for customers with particular needs, including:
• wheelchair access to nearly all Enquiry Centres
• help with filling in forms
• for people with hearing difficulties — RNID Typetalk — Induction loops.
We can also arrange additional support such as:
• home visits, if you have limited mobility or caring responsibilities and cannot get to one of our Enquiry Centres
• the services of an interpreter
• sign language interpretation
• leaflets in large print, Braille and audio.

For complete details please:
• go online at www.hmrc.gov.uk/eng/index.htm or
• contact us. You will find us in The Phone Book under HM Revenue & Customs.

Open Government
The Claimant Compliance Manual contains more details about our work in this area. You can see it:
• online at www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/ccmmanual/index.htm or
• in any Enquiry Centre. The address is in The Phone Book under HM Revenue & Customs.

These notes describe in general terms what is likely to happen. If you would like more details, please contact the HMRC office shown on the covering letter.