



Tax credits checks

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 current tax credits award, we call this an 'examination'.

If we check your previous tax credits award, we call this an 'enquiry'.

You can ask an independent tribunal at any time for a direction that we stop our enquiry. If we think we should continue with the check we'll ask the tribunal to decide what should happen.

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. If we ask you for any original documents then we can't accept photocopies.

We may also ask your employers and childcare providers for information.

If we can't confirm that the documents are genuine or belong to you, we'll need to keep them for further checks. Once we've confirmed that the documents are genuine, we'll return them to you.

What will happen if you don't contact us

It's very important you give us the information we need, or tell us about any difficulties you have providing it. If you don't send us this information by the date we gave you, we may suspend your tax credits payments. We can also ask an independent tribunal to charge you a penalty of up to £300.

If we suspend your payments and you still don't give us this information, we may stop or reduce your tax credits. You may then have to pay back any tax credits that we've already paid you. It's very important that you contact us.

Mistakes

We won't charge you a penalty if you:

- tell us about a change in circumstances within one month of the change, see opposite
- take reasonable care to give us correct information on your claim
- took care with your claim, but still made a mistake

If you're not sure what to do, we suggest you take independent advice before you decide.

Difficulties supplying information

If you have a good reason for not giving us the information, tell us. We'll listen to what you say and, if you can't provide the information or it doesn't exist, we'll work with you to find alternatives.

A good reason for not providing information might be that:

- your documents have been lost through fire, flood or theft and you can't replace them in time
- you have a serious illness or other personal circumstances that prevents you from sending the information

What isn't a good reason is that you have been too busy to send us the information.

Help

If you have any questions or would like more details, contact the HMRC office shown on the covering letter.

Changes in circumstances

You must tell us within one month if:

- you get married, become a civil partner or part of a couple living together as if you're married
- you stop being part of a married couple, civil partnership or a couple living together as if you're married
- your childcare costs go down by an average of £10 a week or more
- your childcare costs stop or you stop paying for childcare costs
- you (or your partner)
 - leave the UK permanently
 - go abroad for a temporary absence lasting more than 8 weeks (or more than 12 weeks if you go abroad because you're ill, or because a member of your family is ill or has died)
 - lose your right to reside in the UK
- you're a couple responsible for a child and you work at least 16 hours but your partner is no longer
 - incapacitated
 - an inpatient in hospital
 - in prison or custody awaiting trial or sentence
 - entitled to Carers Allowance
- you start working, either in employment or self-employment
- your working hours drop below 16 a week
- you're a couple responsible for a child and your joint working hours drop below 24 a week (to qualify one of you must work at least 16 hours)
- you're working 30 hours or more a week and your hours drop below 30 (joint hours count for couples with children)
- you're laid off or stop work
- you have been on strike for more than 10 days
- a child or young person you're responsible for leaves the family to live with someone else or dies

continued >>>

Asking someone to help you

If you'd like independent help, you can ask a friend, relative, 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 can't talk to anyone without your permission.

If you do ask someone to help you, either:

- fill in form TC689, 'Authority for an intermediary to act on your behalf',
 go to GOV.UK and search for TC689, fill in the online form and return it to us
- write and tell us the
 - name and address of the person
 - 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're 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.

About our decision

If you feel your payments shouldn't be suspended, you have the right to contact us to discuss whether or not they can be reinstated.

You have the right to ask us to reconsider if we:

- change your award
- ask you to pay a penalty
- charge you interest on any overpayment

We call this mandatory reconsideration and we'll tell you how to ask us to reconsider our decision in the letter we'll send telling you what we've done.

Our leaflet WTC/AP, 'What to do if you think your Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit decision is wrong' gives more information about how to ask for a reconsideration. If you want to get a copy,

 go to GOV.UK and search for WTC/AP.

If you're still unhappy after the reconsideration, you can appeal to an independent tribunal. Our Mandatory Reconsideration Notice will tell you how to do this.

Child Benefit

If you're claiming Child Benefit, any changes to your family circumstances may affect the amount you receive.

Your rights and obligations

'Your Charter' explains what you can expect from us and what we expect from you.

 For more information, go to www.gov.uk/hmrc/your-charter

Change in circumstances continued

- a child or young person you're responsible for stops qualifying for support, for example, they
 - leave full-time non-advanced education or approved training before the age of 20
 - start to have their training provided under a contract of employment
 - start paid work for 24 hours or more a week and they're not in full-time non-advanced education
 - stop being registered with a careers service, Connexions, local authority support service, Ministry of Defence or similar organisation within the EU
 - start to claim Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit in their own right

You should also tell us about changes in disability benefits paid for you, your partner or child, and any other changes which you think might affect your entitlement.

Open government

The Claimant Compliance Manual contains more details about our work in this area. To read the manual,

 Go to GOV.UK and search for the the Claimant Compliance Manual

Yr laith Gymraeg

Ffoniwch 0300 200 1900 i dderbyn fersiynau Cymraeg o ffurflenni a chanllawia

We've a range of services for disabled people. These include guidance in Braille, audio and large print. Most of our forms are also available in large print. Contact our helplines for more information.

These notes are for guidance only and reflect the position at the time of writing. They don't affect any right of appeal.

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