

HMRC urges caution as fraudsters seek to hijack personal tax accounts

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is today warning customers not to share sensitive personal information online to avoid their identities being used to commit tax fraud.

HMRC is aware that criminals are attempting to obtain customers' Government Gateway logins and other personal details, enabling them to register for Income Tax Self Assessment and submit bogus tax refund claims before pocketing the repayment.

Individuals, ranging from teenagers to pensioners, are being targeted on social media platforms by fraudsters seeking to 'borrow' their identities. In return, the individual is promised a cut of the tax refund 'risk-free'.

Handing over sensitive personal information to criminals like this, even inadvertently, risks individuals involving themselves in tax fraud, and having to pay back the full value of the fraudulent claim.

Customers should therefore only deal with HMRC directly or through their tax advisor in relation to their Self Assessment tax refunds.

Simon Cubitt, Head of Cybercrime, HMRC said:

People need to think extremely carefully before they involve themselves in an arrangement like this, because if something looks too good to be true, then it almost certainly is.

Those who get involved risk becoming the victim of blackmail, threats of violence and wider abuse of their personal information, as criminals seek to exploit them further.

I urge anyone who may be aware of these dishonest attempts to recruit individuals into criminality, to report it us by searching 'Report Fraud HMRC' on GOV.UK and completing our online form.

In addition to their Government Gateway credentials, customers may also be asked to provide details of their bank account, passport, driving licence, address, date of birth, and National Insurance number.

HMRC is working with other law enforcement agencies and social media companies to tackle criminality on online platforms.

Last month (10 February), HMRC made coordinated arrests of four individuals aged between 16 and 33 in Hertfordshire, Bristol, Derbyshire and Buckinghamshire as part of an investigation into suspected Self Assessment repayment fraud and money laundering offences. Investigations are ongoing.

The [National Cyber Security Centre](#) has helpful guides on how to stay secure online and protect yourself or your business against cybercrime.

Contact your bank immediately if you think you've shared personal information online, and report it to Action Fraud (in Scotland, contact the police on 101). If you have been approached by someone asking for tax information, [you can report it to HMRC](#).

Details of the arrests:

- a man aged 16 from Hertfordshire
- a man aged 22 from Buckinghamshire
- a man aged 26 from Derbyshire
- a man aged 33 from Bristol

The deadline for 2020 to 2021 Self Assessment tax returns was 31 January. Earlier this year, HMRC waived late penalties for one month to give customers extra time to meet their obligations without facing a penalty. More than 11.3 million customers filed their tax return by 28 February. Any customers who are yet to pay their tax in full, or set up a time to pay arrangement, have until 1 April to do so to avoid a late payment penalty.