

# Press release: Self Assessment returns: unbelievable excuses and dubious expenses

Most of our customers complete their tax returns honestly and on time but every year HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) receives some outlandish excuses and expense claims.

Some of the most bizarre excuses HMRC received from customers who missed the Self Assessment deadline include being too short to reach the post box and having fingers too cold to type. Here are some of the strangest from the past year:

1. my mother-in-law is a witch and put a curse on me
2. I'm too short to reach the post box
3. I was just too busy – my first maid left, my second maid stole from me, and my third maid was very slow to learn
4. our junior member of staff registered our client in Self Assessment by mistake because they were not wearing their glasses
5. my boiler had broken and my fingers were too cold to type

You can watch a YouTube video about the [most bizarre excuses](#).

As well as unbelievable excuses, every year we also receive some dubious expenses claims for unconvincing items like woolly underwear and pet insurance for a dog. Some of the most questionable include:

1. a carpenter claiming £900 for a 55-inch TV and sound bar to help him price his jobs
2. £40 on extra woolly underwear, for 5 years
3. £756 for my pet dog insurance
4. a music subscription, so I can listen to music while I work
5. a family holiday to Nigeria

All these excuses and expenses were unsuccessful.

You can watch a YouTube video about [dubious expense claims](#).

Help is available on [GOV.UK](#), from the Self Assessment helpline on 0300 200 3310, and on social media.

Angela MacDonald, HMRC Director General of Customer Services, said:

We want to make it as simple as possible for our customers to do their tax returns and the majority make the effort to do theirs right and on time. But each year we still come across some poor

excuses and expenses which range from problems with maids to televisions.

Help will always be provided for those who have a genuine excuse for not submitting their return on time but it's unfair to the majority of honest taxpayers when others make bogus claims.

If you think you might miss the 31 January deadline, get in touch with us now – the earlier we're contacted, the more we can help.

The deadline for sending 2017 to 2018 Self Assessment tax returns to HMRC, and paying any tax owed, is 31 January 2019.

HMRC will treat those with genuine excuses leniently, as we focus our penalties on those who persistently fail to complete their tax returns and deliberate tax evaders. The excuse must be genuine and we might ask for evidence. Those listed above were all declined on the basis that they were either untrue or not good enough reasons.

Customers who provide HMRC with a reasonable excuse before the 31 January deadline can avoid a penalty after this date.

The penalties for late tax returns are:

- an initial £100 fixed penalty, which applies even if there is no tax to pay, or if the tax due is paid on time
- after 3 months, additional daily penalties of £10 per day, up to a maximum of £900
- after 6 months, a further penalty of 5% of the tax due or £300, whichever is greater
- after 12 months, another 5% or £300 charge, whichever is greater

There are also additional penalties for paying late of 5% of the tax unpaid at 30 days, 6 months and 12 months.

Tax is automatically deducted from the majority of UK taxpayers' wages, pensions or savings. For people or businesses where tax is not automatically deducted, or when they may have earned additional untaxed income, they are required to complete a Self Assessment tax return each year.

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**[Government response: Minister for Asia statement on Arakan Army and Tatmadaw](#)**

## [fighting](#)



Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field said:

I am deeply concerned by the escalation of violence in Rakhine State, including the attack by the Arakan Army on police posts and the targeting of a civilian government minister.

The UK calls on all sides involved in the conflict to show restraint. All sides have a duty to ensure that the safety of civilians is guaranteed, and to respect international law.

I also call on the military to grant access for humanitarian organisations, including the UN, to Rakhine State. The UK continues to urge all parties to come together to allow concerted and visible progress towards implementing the Rakhine Advisory Commission's recommendations. The UK remains strongly committed to a peaceful democratic transition in Burma.

### **Further information**

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## [Press release: HS2 unearths new opportunities for trainee archaeologists](#)

Just a year ago, the trainees had no idea they could get the opportunity to become archaeologists. Now they are playing a pivotal role in the delivery of Britain's new high-speed railway by supporting the most extensive

archaeological dig currently underway in Europe.

The 10 trainees, aged 18 to 58, came through the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA) Construction Gateway programme, funded by £5 million from the National Retraining Fund. Following an initial 6 week training programme, delivered in conjunction with BMet College, a number of the trainees have gone on to be directly employed by archaeology and built-heritage specialists, MOLA Headland.

Kate Myers, HS2 Ltd's Head of Skills, Employment and Education, said:

Not only is HS2 driving business growth and creating jobs right across the country, it is playing a crucial role in upskilling the nation and supporting people into meaningful employment.

Even at this early stage in the programme, we're expanding the breadth of people working in a diverse range of transport and infrastructure-related roles and creating a talented and highly skilled workforce for the future.

Working alongside HS2's enabling works contractor LM, the trainees are learning from MOLA Headland's archaeological experts at the site of Birmingham's brand new high speed rail terminus station. For 63 years, between 1810 and 1873, a section of the site on adjoining Park Street was a burial ground, and archaeologists at the site are studying the remains of those interred.

Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, who leads the WMCA, said:

Our construction sector is booming in the region, and the WMCA's Construction Gateway programme is making fantastic progress in helping people find rewarding jobs in this growing industry.

The archaeological dig at HS2's site in Birmingham presented a fantastic opportunity for unemployed local people to find an interesting way into work, and we were delighted to help fund the training necessary to kick-start their careers. Congratulations to all the trainees who have gained work through this project.

The site in Birmingham forms part of a wider archaeological programme. Over the next 2 years, more than 1,000 archaeologists, period specialists, scientists and conservators from across the UK will be exploring and recording over 60 sites from London to West Midlands.

Ranging from the Prehistoric period to Roman Britain, the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval ages, the Industrial Revolution and World War Two, HS2's archaeology programme will be Europe's biggest dig and promises to provide a fascinating insight into the everyday lives of the people and communities who made modern

Britain.

58-year-old Mick joined MOLA Headland as a trainee archaeologist in November 2018. He had worked in the building trade for many years before becoming a publican, but health problems meant he found himself out of work for a number of years. Whilst unemployed, Mick followed his interest in archaeology by taking part in a number of community digs, and it was through his local group that he found out about the archaeology traineeship opportunity. Mick said:

I didn't think I'd ever get the opportunity to explore a career in archaeology, as I don't have an academic background in the subject. Being selected to do the archaeology traineeship, and to be linked to a project as huge as HS2 is just amazing. I'm so pleased to be here.

The programme has also provided a new start for busy mum of two Iram, who had been volunteering in a law firm. Eager to progress and start a career, she was drawn to the vocational nature of the archaeology traineeship. Iram said:

Having studied medical law, I was really intrigued to find out more about the study of skeletons and evidence of medical interventions in the past. I really enjoyed the traineeship and am keen to explore if there is a future for me in archaeology.

Eleanor, 19, recently left college having completed a course in cyber security. She was finding it hard to get work and had been turned down on a number of occasions on account of her Asperger's. Eleanor, also a trainee archaeologist at MOLA Headland, said:

I wanted to find a career that would interest me and am now really enjoying working in archaeology. It's great to be part of a team working on something so unique.

The design, construction and operation of HS2 presents a huge opportunity to upskill local workers and create a new industry in high speed rail we can export around the world. The UK needs more skilled workers to build HS2, as the project will support 30,000 roles at peak construction, 2,000 of which will be apprenticeships.

Claire Brough, Skills, Employment and Education Lead at LM, said:

With a series of sites for HS2 in the heart of Birmingham, LM has been keen to work with regional bodies such as BMet and West Midlands Combined Authority to create employment opportunities. I'm proud of the role that we have played in giving these trainees a stepping stone into the world of archaeology on such a landmark

project. This is one of the most exciting projects in a generation, and the skills they'll learn will hopefully set them on the route to a rosy future.

For more information about careers and opportunities to work on HS2, [visit the HS2 careers website](#).

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## [Speech: Jeremy Wright's Value of Culture Speech](#)

Thank you very much for that introduction Martin.

I couldn't agree more about the importance of the UK City of Culture and the huge impact it can have on the cities that hold the title.

As some of you will know, during its year as UK City of Culture, the city of Hull added 300 million pounds to the local economy and created 800 new jobs.

But perhaps more remarkably, and perhaps more importantly, over 95 per cent of its population attended a cultural event in the course of that year as City of Culture.

And in two years time, it's Coventry's turn. What Hull's experience showed and what I am convinced Coventry's experience will show, is that culture really matters.

It matters to the wellbeing of us as individuals, it matters to the health of our communities and it matters to the strength of our nation.

So first, let me say something about us as individuals.

Recent analysis of the Understanding Society survey painted a compelling picture of the impact that the arts can have on our development and wellbeing.

It showed how engagement with the arts is linked with higher happiness and self-esteem in young people, helping them to foster feelings of personal pride and achievement.

Adults who make more frequent visits to libraries, arts events or cultural sites tend to have better health and well-being than those who visit infrequently.

So culture plays a big part in making us healthier and happier people. But it also provides some of the answers to complex questions around the future of employment and productivity.

Creativity is increasingly recognised as a vital skill by employers and educators alike. In many ways, it is the most future proof skill we can have.

Automation is set to further transform the way we live and work. And this means the attributes that can't be replicated by machines, like creativity, empathy and ingenuity, will be at a premium.

Nobody has yet developed an algorithm that can create an Oscar winning film, or create a TV show that drives profound social change, like BBC's Planet Earth.

And the UK's cultural and creative industries are a vital and growing part of our economy.

They made a record contribution in 2017, more than a 100 billion pounds for the first time.

And they will be providing good jobs for a long time to come.

The challenge is how to help our young people to see the range of careers that culture has to offer.

And wherever they come from and whatever they look like, to help them see themselves pursuing those careers.

But we don't have to make a living through culture for culture to change the way we live.

How we engage with culture of all kinds can change the way we see the world and the way we see ourselves, and that is particularly true when we are young.

When I was 13, the same age as my daughter is now, I was persuaded to act in the school play. Now I don't remember the reviews, most of them anyway, but I still feel the benefit to my self-confidence.

So much so that I can still make the connection between standing on that stage then and standing on this stage now, not to mention the stages, real and metaphorical, I have stood on in between, performing in the courtroom and in the Commons.

And it's not just me of course.

Look at the alumni of our world renowned National Youth Theatre.

They are not only celebrated actors like Helen Mirren, Daniel Day-Lewis and Idris Elba, but also writers, musicians and journalists who have been able to transfer the skills they learned to thrive in their chosen career.

Skills of self-confidence, teamwork and dedication are eminently transferable, and they are learned through the opportunities arts and culture can offer.

And I want more young people to be able to take advantage of these opportunities.

And so in September I was delighted to announce a 5 million pound pilot to create youth performance partnerships across England.

This scheme will bring arts organisations and schools together to teach practical performance skills, both on and off stage, to those who wouldn't have the chance otherwise.

It will also link primary and secondary schools with playwrights to give children the opportunity to perform new works by up and coming writers, from diverse backgrounds and from across the UK.

I'm pleased to have seen some really strong bids and I'm looking forward to making the final announcement of the successful bidders in the Spring.

I know my colleagues at the Department for Education share our ambition in these areas. And I will be working with them to bring the benefits of drama, dance, art, music and more to a greater number of young people.

But culture of course can make all of us healthier, happier and safer.

My department is working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England, to support greater use of social prescribing, in particular to address loneliness and help people with their mental health.

Evaluation of existing projects in England has shown that prescribed arts and reading programmes can reduce anxiety, depression and lead to an increase in feelings of social inclusion – strengthening communities and giving people a sense of belonging.

And I very much welcome the Secretary of State for Health's recent speech on the value of arts and health.

And I look forward to social prescribing becoming a mainstream part of NHS delivery, with 60 per cent of Clinical Commissioning Groups currently supporting the delivery of social prescribing projects.

So culture can offer us opportunities, teach us about ourselves and even help to keep us healthy.

But it can also help to offer us second chances. I had the privilege of serving as Minister for Prisons and Rehabilitation for two years.

In that time I came across offenders who painted, sculpted and even sang opera as part of their rehabilitation. And in many cases it worked.

It worked because those things provided an outlet, they offered a sometimes new experience of excelling at something, and for some, indicated a lawful way to make a living.

We can all benefit from access to the arts and we should all be able to.



And so I welcome the Arts Council England's clear indication that they want to use the next 10 year strategy to further increase participation.

The Creative People and Places programme has already been hugely important – reaching 2 million people who would not ordinarily participate in art and culture.

It gives local communities the chance to make decisions to shape the culture they want in their local area.

And I wholeheartedly support today's announcement from the Arts Council that they will be investing an additional 27 million pounds in this programme.

Funding which will be targeted at places with the 'least engaged' population in arts and culture, and that will build on the success of other projects that have previously received funding.

I want every cultural organisation receiving public funding to have the objective of boosting participation.

Because culture is good for us all.

And it's good for communities too, because our culture brings us together – through objects and experiences from which we can all take pleasure and pride.

And I am sure none of us can remember a time when Britain has needed that power to unite more.

So this week, of all weeks, I make the case for culture's capacity to heal our wounds.

Whatever our views on the European Union, we are proud of..

Our film industry, which in the past five years has picked up 61 BAFTAs and 25 Oscars.

We are proud of the impact of our hit shows like Sherlock, which are being enjoyed in over 230 territories across the world.

And we are proud of our recording artists, who accounted for 8 of the top 10 artist albums in 2017.

We share our culture. It belongs to us all.

It can bring us together and we need it to do so now.

We are the same country that united to host the Olympics and Paralympics with such warmth, pride and passion only a few years ago.

A Games that not only showcased the world's athletic talent but transformed attitudes to disability.

Its famous opening ceremony was a celebration not just of a great country but

of a united one – proud of things we achieved together. We need to remind ourselves of that.

So this is a good time to make this case, and this is a good place to make it in.

The City of Coventry stands as an international symbol of reconciliation, of bridging divides.

It has achieved that not least through arts and culture.

From Philip Larkin to the Specials, this is a city that has helped to shape our nation's cultural history.

And I am sure that record will be amplified in its year as City of Culture.

And of course it isn't just in cities of culture where culture must thrive.

The year after Coventry's year of culture we will hold a Festival that will celebrate the creativity that exists across the whole country.

More immediately, we announced in the Autumn Budget, we will be providing 55 million pounds as part of the Future High Streets fund, dedicated to support the regeneration of high street heritage assets.

Those much loved historic buildings that provide a sense of place, community identity and connectedness.

Another example is the Cultural Development Fund, which we launched as part of the Creative Industries Sector Deal.

This is an important part of the Government's modern Industrial Strategy, which has seen over 150 million pounds jointly invested by Government and industry through the Creative Industries Sector Deal.

Designed to help cultural and creative businesses across Britain thrive and consolidate the country's position as a global creative and cultural powerhouse, and further support the view that culture is an integral part of our society and economy.

And so this 20 million pound fund aims to strengthen our advantage as a creative nation by investing in culture, heritage and creativity to unlock economic growth and offer opportunities for regeneration.

In the bids we've had we've seen cultural and creative leaders joining forces with local authorities and higher education to form partnerships and create distinctive bids.

The quality of the bids was exceptionally high, and we should celebrate the fact that so many towns and cities are developing ambitions for investment in culture to drive growth.

And today I am delighted to announce the places that were successful in

receiving funding.

The winning places are: Grimsby, Plymouth, the Thames Estuary in Kent and Essex, Wakefield and Worcester.

Together, these successful projects are set to create over 1,300 new jobs, train and upskill over 2,000 people and leave a lasting legacy in their local communities.

Take the Wakefield bid. Bringing together major and respected cultural organisations including Yorkshire Sculpture Park and The Hepworth, this project will help promote Wakefield to the world.

And this is just one of several transformative projects that will be created thanks to this funding.

Grimsby will focus on using public art to revive its historic town centre, alongside creating a new film, TV and music production facility.

Plymouth will be using cutting-edge digital and immersive technologies to help bring to life the celebrations to mark the 400 year anniversary of the Mayflower's voyage.

The Thames Estuary bid will develop a world leading creative production corridor.

And Worcester will regenerate the city's iconic railway arches, providing affordable workspaces and business support connecting local businesses with local creative talent.

I'd like to thank the Arts Council for administering this fund, and to all the expert panellists who helped us review the bids.

I hope the CDF will suggest to Local Enterprise Partnerships and to local authorities how they might focus their attention on cultural and creative investment as part of developing their local industrial strategies.

We also know that our libraries, leisure centres, historic buildings, museums and galleries help contribute to some of the healthiest and most vibrant communities up and down our country.

Through initiatives like the CDF and the recently launched Northern Cultural Regeneration Social Investment Fund, we can give the financial boost needed to help local communities grow and prosper.

Earlier this week we announced that 4 million pounds from our partnership with the Wolfson Foundation will go towards improving 35 museums and galleries across England, with over 80 per cent of this funding going outside London.

All these investments and improvements matter because strong communities make for a strong country.

And we are a nation that is renowned for its cultural heft. We are a soft power superpower.

The UK recently reclaimed top position in the Global Soft Power Index, driven by our artists, our writers and our cultural institutions. Now we are back on top, we need to stay on top.

And thanks to the great work of our creators, our culture is in demand all across the world.

UK creative and cultural sectors export 27 billion pounds worth of services to the rest of the world.

The exciting growth of digital culture means that our traditional creative institutions have been able to reach new global audiences, for example through live streams of theatre productions.

But they bring huge benefits to our tourism and heritage sectors as well, when people decide that they want to come here and see it for themselves.

One in five visitors to London go to the British Museum.

One Ed Sheeran track is thought to be responsible for 100,000 extra visitors to Framlingham Castle.

And Downton Abbey has helped Highclere Castle, Sherlock Baker Street, and Emily Bronte the moors of West Yorkshire. Our culture and our heritage reinforce each other.

And these cultural exports allow us to break down barriers and reach those that we may not be able to reach with traditional diplomacy.

Our culture and civilisation are our calling card to the world, saying loud and clear that we are committed to equality, tolerance and freedom.

And so I am proud that we are working hard to ensure the protection of cultural assets across the world.

For instance the DCMS funded the 30 million pound Cultural Protection Fund to help preserve and protect heritage in 12 countries in the Middle East and Africa.

And we have been joining the international effort to make sure that buildings, monuments and works of art threatened by Daesh can be given a new lease of life and can be seen and enjoyed by the whole world.

We will maintain these values of openness and cooperation.

And our close cultural links with our friends and partners in the EU, as shown by the agreement for the Bayeux Tapestry to come to England for the first time in 1000 years.

And we can develop new and enduring partnerships.

Only last week we announced that some of the masterpieces in the National Gallery, including van Gogh's famous sunflowers, will go to Japan for the first time as part of Japan's Olympic year.

As we equip our country for the future, a strong arts, heritage and cultural strategy isn't just an afterthought, but rather central to our plans.

In a modern and interconnected world, the places that will be successful are those which can attract and retain highly skilled and talented people.

And places will not attract those people without a strong cultural and heritage offer.

That means our culture isn't just a cause of our soft power and a great export product, although it is both of those things, but also a factor in inward investment decisions, at a local and national level.

Culture is one of the greatest pull factors. Build it, or stage it, and they will come.

China's First Emperor and the Terracotta Warriors at the World Museum in Liverpool drew 600,000 visitors, and in turn brought in a staggering 78 million pounds to the local economy in just eight months.

We all see so many examples of culture proving its worth. But we need to make sure that we keep shouting about it.

Some of you may know there is a Spending Review coming up and so it is more important than ever that we all give the most robust possible evidence about the impact of what we do.

And I don't just mean evidence of economic impact. But demonstrating that the superb experiences that you provide are benefiting all parts of the United Kingdom.

In terms of geographical spread, but also race, gender and social backgrounds.

Proving the social and cultural impact of our work will be an important part of our argument and I know it is an argument that we can make with real force.

The UK is already leading the world in our work to understand and properly measure the impact that culture can have.

I have asked my department to build on this, and DCMS will bring together academia and policy makers at a forthcoming summit on the measurement of cultural value.

So that we will be better placed to make fully rounded arguments about culture's true value to society.

Because culture shows humanity at its best and the United Kingdom's culture

shows our country at its best.

Our capacity to create new experiences that transcend boundaries and make life more fulfilling for all of us.

Our capacity to make and do things that make us all laugh, cry, sing, dream or ponder together.

And what better moment than now to remind ourselves of what our culture can do.

Thank you very much.

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## [Press release: Chief Constable launches new CNC jobs website](#)

Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) Chief Constable Mike Griffiths, CBE, has launched a new CNC recruitment website.

The website gives an insight into what it's like to work for the UK's most unique police force.

The new website has been designed to highlight the wide range of career opportunities available within the CNC. It also provides applicants important information and advice about entry requirements and enables them to apply for roles in the CNC across the UK.

CNC Chief Constable Mike Griffiths said: "We attract people from a diverse range of career paths and backgrounds and this new website reflects our values and culture very well.

"The website allows people thinking about joining the police a chance to explore what we can offer them, and what we want from them.

"On the website some of my colleagues describe what they do on a day-to-day basis and this gives potential applicants a good insight into the sort of work we do.

"The CNC operates across the UK and the website allows potential applicants a chance to explore what each location has to offer them and their family.

"We are always on the look-out for talented people who want to make a contribution to keeping the country safe. If you think this could be you, have a look at the website and find out."

The CNC has 1,500 officers and staff and is responsible for protecting civil nuclear facilities in the UK and nuclear material in transit. All the CNC's

frontline police constables and sergeants are armed.

The new CNC jobs website can be found [here](#)