

HMRC launches consultation to address concerns about Repayment Agents

New measures to stop rip-off agents taking advantage of people and pocketing their tax repayments have been proposed by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

HMRC today launched a 12-week consultation [Raising standards in tax advice: Protecting customers claiming tax repayments](#) to consider ways to better protect taxpayers from Repayment Agents who make routine tax claims on people's behalf but can take up to half, or even more, of the payment.

Taxpayers can use Repayment Agents to make claims for repayments of tax, and many are happy with the service they receive. On the other hand, many taxpayers have complained that the scale of the charges are unclear or even hidden, while questions have been raised about how some agents secure agreements from customers.

The consultation proposes various ways to better protect the public from unscrupulous practices and ensure they receive the money they are entitled to, while also asking various questions to better understand the problem.

This includes seeking views on:

- restricting the use of assignments, where contracts legally transfer the right to a repayment from a taxpayer to an agent
- introducing measures designed to ensure taxpayers see material information about a repayment agent's service before entering into a contractual agreement
- requiring repayment agents to register with HMRC

HMRC is aware of a number of specific concerns with the industry including excessive amounts of commission charged for routine tax repayments. However, taxpayers can make a claim directly through [HMRC's free online service](#) on GOV.UK and keep 100% of the repayment themselves.

There is also strong evidence that many taxpayers do not understand the terms they are signing up to and feel misled, some even believing they are dealing with HMRC directly rather than a third party.

Other concerns include the submission of high volume or speculative claims where no repayment is due, resulting in delays to genuine claims, as well as the use of assignments which means the repayment goes to the Repayment Agent instead of the taxpayer.

Jonathan Athow, HMRC's Director General for Customer Strategy and Tax Design, said:

We want to make sure taxpayers receive their full tax claims – putting 100% of the money they are due into their pockets – and not

be taken in by the unscrupulous practices of some Repayment Agents.

The 'Raising standards in tax advice' consultation aims to seek views so we can better understand and address the issues to help raise standards in the tax advice market. We're urging anyone affected to respond to the consultation and share their experiences.

HMRC is interested in hearing the views of all tax agents, particularly those who specialise in helping taxpayers claim repayments; taxpayers who have claimed or considered claiming tax refunds through repayment agents; those who have seen adverts from repayment agents; charitable organisations; consumer groups; and accountancy professional bodies.

The consultation is now open and will run until 14 September 2022.

HMRC is also reminding taxpayers that they remain responsible for their own tax. If they do appoint an agent, they should take care to ensure they are aware of fees and the terms and conditions of service, and not to share their HMRC login details with them. HMRC has published [standards for agents](#) and will take action against agents who breach them.

The proposals within the consultation have been informed by: '[Use of High Volume Agents to claim tax rebates](#)', published in June 2021.

The consultation is being run in line with the Tax Consultation Framework.

Responses should be sent by 14 September by email to: repaymentsconsultation@hmrc.gov.uk or by post to:

Alex Beer
Agent Policy Team
HMRC
14 Westfield Avenue
Stratford
E20 1HZ

We recommend you respond by email.

We have introduced a survey to make it easier for taxpayers who may not be familiar with the consultation process to respond.

In addition to written responses, HMRC intends to hold a number of roundtable discussions with interested stakeholders, who should email repaymentsconsultation@hmrc.gov.uk if they would like to be involved.

HMRC has published the [HMRC Agent Standard](#), which sets out the acceptable level of standards and behaviour that all tax agents should meet, including exercising professional competence and due care.

Questions to ask when choosing an agent:

- is the agent a member of a professional body that regulates their conduct and standards?
- will the claim be made in accordance with HMRC's view of the law, or is HMRC is likely to challenge the validity of the claim if they look into it?
- if the agent will deduct their fee from my tax repayment and HMRC later looks into my claim and asks for the repayment back, how will I recover the agent's fee from them in order to fund the tax bill?
- does the agent have insurance to cover them if something goes wrong, and are they registered for Anti Money Laundering supervision?

[Joanna C report and safety flyer published](#)

News story

Capsize and sinking of a scallop dredger off Newhaven, England, with the loss of two lives.



Today, we have published our fatal accident investigation report after the fishing vessel Joanna C (BM265) snagged its gear on a line of whelk pots and capsized rapidly on 21 November 2020. Only one of the three crew survived.

The report contains details of what happened, subsequent actions taken and recommendations: [read more](#).

Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents, Andrew Moll OBE, said:

The MAIB's investigation into the loss of Joanna C set out to answer two key questions: why did it capsize, and why did only one

of the three crew survive? Today, we are publishing the report that answers both these questions. Joanna C capsized because it had insufficient reserves of stability to recover from the heel created when the fishing gear became snagged. This happened because of modifications to the vessel that had severely eroded its stability characteristics, and this went undetected.

Of equal importance today, I want to highlight the findings of our investigation regarding Joanna C's liferaft; this issue reaches beyond the fishing industry to any vessel carrying a 'non-SOLAS' liferaft. Lifesaving appliances are just that – for saving life, so it is vital that such equipment will function correctly in the event of an emergency. Unfortunately, Joanna C's 'float-free' liferaft arrangements did not work as expected. Although the liferaft was released from its cradle as the vessel sank, it did not come to the surface and inflate. This significantly impacted the chances of survival for the two crew in the water, only one of whom survived. The MAIB's investigation found that the uninflated liferaft had insufficient buoyancy to trigger the gas inflation system, leaving it suspended mid-water still attached to the sunken vessel (see headline image). Furthermore, the liferaft had not been manufactured to meet any specific standard, although this was acceptable for a small fishing vessel at the time. Prior to publication of today's report, an immediate MAIB recommendation was made to amend the International Standard Organisation's standard for non-SOLAS liferafts (known as ISO-9650) to ensure they have sufficient buoyancy in the uninflated state to activate the inflation mechanism, where 'float-free' arrangements are in place.

The safety message is that it is vital to ensure that lifesaving appliances will work as expected. Where 'float-free' arrangements are in place, the liferaft must have sufficient buoyancy to trigger the inflation mechanism once it has been released from the cradle as the vessel sinks.

A [safety flyer](#) to the fishing industry summarising the accident and detailing the safety lessons learned, has also been produced.

Published 22 June 2022

[Robots doing what humans can't at Culham](#)

Part of the UK-wide Festival of Robotics, visitors were treated to a behind-

the-scenes look inside UKAEA's RACE (Remote Applications in Challenging Environments) where cutting-edge technology is being developed to help design and maintain future fusion energy plants.

Fusion, the process that powers the sun and stars, is described as the ultimate energy source and promises to provide safe, sustainable and low carbon power for generations to come.

Nick Sykes, Head of Operations for RACE at UKAEA, said: "The UK is leading the way in fusion energy which we believe will be an environmentally responsible part of the world's energy supply in the second half of this century. Robotics' will play a key role in maintaining fusion powerplants.

"It has been fantastic to showcase the very cool robotics work taking place here at UKAEA and we hope to have inspired the next generation of robotics engineers."

Visitors were able to see the use of artificial intelligence in fusion machines, the latest technology in robot handling, and test their own skills as the next generation of robot operators.

Dave Baker who travelled to Culham from Winchester, said: "The technology being shown at UKAEA is leading edge. It shows how far in front we are. It was absolutely fascinating, and interesting to see all the practical applications for the robots."

Annie Turner, from Chinnor, added: "I didn't know what to expect or what it would be like. It was really interesting and I learned loads. The technology was inspirational, especially for children looking at future careers in engineering."

Technology developed at UKAEA's Culham campus will also be useful for other challenging environments such as space, mining and nuclear decommissioning.

The UK Festival of Robotics is an annual celebration hosted by the EPSRC UK Robotics and Autonomous Systems (UK-RAS) Network, which provides academic leadership in robotics and coordinates activities at over 30 partner universities across the UK.

To find out more about our RACE facility, please visit <https://race.ukaea.uk/> or view some of our online videos on the @UKAEAofficial YouTube channel.

Visit the UK-RAS website for further information about the [UK Festival of Robotics 2022](#)

[RSH publishes regulatory judgement for Shepherds Bush Housing Association for breach of the economic standards](#)

Press release

The Regulator has downgraded the provider for non-compliance with the governance element



In a regulatory judgement published today (22 June 2022), the Regulator of Social Housing has concluded that Shepherds Bush Housing Association Limited is non-compliant with the governance element of the economic standards and downgraded it to G3 status.

Following an in-depth assessment and reactive engagement, RSH has found that Shepherds Bush has been unable to provide assurance that its governance arrangements had been effective. Weaknesses in its risk management, internal control frameworks and business plan reporting meant it failed to identify the potential crystallisation of financial risks in sufficient time. RSH also identified concerns about fire safety reporting and compliance with the Decent Homes Standard at Shepherds Bush and found that data quality is an ongoing issue for this housing association. There have also been a number of incidences where Shepherds Bush's communication and provision of information to RSH fell below the required standard.

In response to the regulator's investigation and in agreement with RSH, Shepherds Bush has accelerated several actions to improve its governance and put in place a Governance Assurance Plan that includes an overarching governance review, improvements to the financial governance and controls and several data reviews.

Shepherds Bush Housing Association remains compliant with the financial viability element of the economic standards and retains its V2 status.

Harold Brown, RSH's Senior Assistant Director, Investigations and Enforcement, said:

Shepherds Bush Housing Association's failed to manage its affairs appropriately in relation to risk management, fire safety and the decency of its tenants' homes. We remind all social housing landlords that they have a responsibility to notify us promptly about potential breaches of our standards. We will continue to monitor Shepherds Bush Housing Association as it improves its governance.

1. Registered providers of social housing with more than 1,000 units are awarded both governance (G) and financial viability (V) grades for their compliance with the Governance and Financial Viability Standard. Grades of G1 and G2 indicate compliance with the governance element of the Governance and Financial Viability Standard, while grades of G3 and G4 indicate non-compliance. Similarly, V1 and V2 grades indicate compliance with the financial element and V3 and V4 grades indicate non-compliance.
2. RSH placed Shepherds Bush Housing Association on the [gradings under review list](#) on 22 December 2021 to indicate that it was investigating the provider's compliance with the governance element of the Governance and Financial Viability Standard. This was updated on 22 March 2022 to indicate that the RSH investigation would be extended to consider compliance with the financial viability element of the Governance and Financial Viability Standard.
3. Based on evidence gained from its latest financial forecasts, RSH has assurance that Shepherds Bush Housing Association complies with the financial viability element of the Governance and Financial Viability Standard and that its financial plans are consistent with, and support, its financial strategy. Shepherds Bush Housing Association's gradings are now G3 and V2. Its most recent previous gradings were G2 and V2.
4. More information about how RSH regulates against its [standards](#) is available in [Regulating the Standards](#).
5. RSH promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver and maintain homes of appropriate quality that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.
6. For press office contact details, see our [Media enquiries page](#). For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

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[VICH Public Consultation on guidelines relating to efficacy of anthelmintic products](#)

News story

VICH consultation until 1 November 2022 on guidelines relating to the technical requirements for demonstrating efficacy of anthelmintic products.



As an Observer Member of [VICH](#) (the International Cooperation on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Veterinary Medicinal Products), we are inviting comments through a public consultation on proposed revisions to existing guidelines relating to the technical requirements for demonstrating efficacy of anthelmintic products in different animal species.

In addition to the general requirements, recommendations for bovines, ovines, caprines, equines, porcines, canines, felines, and poultry are being revised.

The proposed draft documents are published at [Draft Guidelines for public consultation \(vichsec.org\)](#) and the consultation remains open until 1 November 2022.

Comments should be relevant to these specific guidelines, and can either be general on the approach outlined or comments on the actual text of the guideline.

Email your comments to vichcomments@vmd.gov.uk and we will compile and submit all comments to the relevant VICH expert working group(s) for consideration.

We are not able to respond to questions or comments directly.

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