

# Scammers targeting Self Assessment customers, HMRC warns

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is warning Self Assessment customers to be on their guard following the Self Assessment deadline after more than 570,000 scams were reported to HMRC in the last year.

At this time of year, Self Assessment customers are at increased risk of falling victim to scams, even if they don't mention Self Assessment. They can be taken in by scam texts, emails or calls either offering a 'refund' or demanding unpaid tax, thinking that they are genuine HMRC communications referring to their Self Assessment return. In the 12 months to January 2022, nearly 220,000 scams reported to HMRC offered bogus tax rebates.

Criminals target unsuspecting Self Assessment customers to try and steal money or personal information. They use phone calls, texts and emails to try and dupe citizens, and often mimic government messages to make them appear authentic. In January 2022, phone scams rose to 3,995 compared to 425 reported in April 2020.

Myrtle Lloyd, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

If someone contacts you saying they're from HMRC, wanting you to transfer money or give personal information, be on your guard.

Never let yourself be rushed, and if you're in any doubt then check our 'HMRC scams' advice on GOV.UK.

HMRC gave customers an extra month to submit a completed tax return and if customers filed by 28 February 2022, they would avoid a late filing penalty. More than 11.3 million customers filed their Self Assessment tax return by 28 February, with more than one million of those taking advantage of the extra time by filing in February.

Customers have until 1 April to pay their outstanding tax bill or set up a Time to Pay arrangement to avoid receiving a late payment penalty. Interest has been applied to all outstanding balances since 1 February.

Customers can now make Self Assessment payments quickly and securely through the [HMRC app](#). Customers choosing to make secure Self Assessment payments through the HMRC app can either connect to their bank to make their payments or pay by Direct Debit, personal debit card or corporate/commercial credit/debit card.

A full list of the payment methods customers can use to [pay their Self Assessment tax bill](#) is available on GOV.UK.

HMRC has a dedicated team working on cyber and phone crimes. They use

innovative technologies to prevent misleading and malicious communications from ever reaching the customer. Since 2017, these technical controls have prevented 500 million emails from reaching HMRC's customers. More recently, new controls have prevented 90% of the most convincing SMS messages from reaching the public and controls have been applied to prevent spoofing of most HMRC helpline numbers.

HMRC is also reminding Self Assessment customers to double check websites and online forms before using them to complete their 2020 to 2021 tax return. People can be taken in by misleading websites designed to make them pay for help in submitting tax returns or charging to connect them to HMRC phone lines. Customers who are in any doubt about whether a website is genuine should visit GOV.UK for more [information about Self Assessment](#) and use the free signposted tax return forms.

The Self Assessment deadline for 2020 to 2021 tax returns was 31 January 2022.

The free [HMRC app](#) is available on either the App Store for iOS or the Google Play Store for Android. Customers will need their Government Gateway user ID and password to sign into their account for the first time.

In the last 12 months (to January 2022) HMRC has:

- responded to 572,423 referrals of suspicious contact from the public. More than 219,740 of these offered bogus tax rebates
- worked with the telecoms industry and Ofcom to remove more than 920 phone numbers being used to commit HMRC-related phone scams
- responded to 267,671 reports of phone scams in total. In April 2020 HMRC received reports of only 425 phone scams. In January 2022 this had risen to 3,995
- reported more than 6,160 malicious web pages for takedown
- detected 463 COVID-19-related financial scams since March 2020, most by text message
- asked Internet Service Providers to take down 443 COVID-19-related scam web pages

---

## [Horizon Europe guarantee: open letters to the UK research and development sector](#)

On 15 March 2022, the government announced an extension to the support provided to Horizon Europe applicants launched in November 2021. This ensures that eligible successful UK applicants for grant awards will continue to be guaranteed funding as negotiations with the European Union continue.

The March 2022 open letter to the UK research and development (R&D) sector from the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation accompanies the announcement of an extension to the guarantee to provide a financial safety net for successful UK applicants to Horizon Europe, while the government continues to push to formalise our association as soon as possible.

The guarantee will now be in place for awards expected to be signed by the end of December 2022 while efforts continue to associate to Horizon Europe, as both the UK and the EU agreed under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) last year. Continued delays have led to uncertainty for researchers, businesses and innovators based in the UK and their consortia partners across Europe.

The funding will continue to be delivered through UK Research and Innovation, and details regarding the scope and terms of the extension to the guarantee will be made available on their website shortly:

In the 30 November 2021 letter, the Minister first set out the UK's commitment to association and his priorities for supporting the sector in all scenarios – including where association proves not possible.

---

## [Advice for fans travelling to Belgrade, Serbia for the UEFA Europa League match](#)

World news story

Advice for fans travelling to Belgrade, Serbia for the UEFA Europa League match



**Red Star v Rangers**

**Date: Thursday 17th March**

**Venue: Stadium Rajko Mitić (Red Star) – Belgrade**

**Kick off time: 18.45 (local time)**

### **Passports, Visas and Insurance**

- You do not need a visa to travel to Serbia; however, you should ensure that your passport is valid for the duration of your stay.
- Remember to take out travel insurance, even if you are only going for one night – it could save you a lot of money if you get into difficulties. Please note that your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is not valid in Serbia.
- You do not have to carry your passport on your person while in Serbia but you should carry a copy if the authorities ask to see ID.
- If you lose your passport, you will need to apply for an Emergency Travel Document online. All information [here](#).

### **Getting to the stadium**

The address for the stadium is Ljutice Bogdana 1a, 11000 Belgrade. For further information about the stadium, please visit [this link](#). Entry for away supporters is via Bulevar Oslobođenja street.

### **At the match**

Advice for when you are at the match:

- Access to the stadium might be slow; there will be ticket checks; body searches will take place at the entrance to the turnstiles
- Glass or plastic bottles, cans, coins, poles, lighters, flares and pyrotechnics, video cameras are not permitted inside the stadium.
- Alcohol is banned within the stadium and 1km surrounding the stadium, 3 hours before and 3 hours after the match.

### **Tips**

As in any other city beware of pickpockets and bag snatchers at airports, railway stations, around the town centre and when using public transport. Only carry what you need and leave spare cash and valuables in hotel safety deposits. There is the potential for protests in Belgrade and other towns and cities. Protests can lead to significant disruption, including to public transport. Keep up to date with local developments and avoid any large crowds and demonstrations.

British Embassy address  
Consular Section  
British Embassy  
Resavska 46  
11000 Belgrade

Serbia

Telephone +381 11 306 0900 (also for out of hours emergencies)

Office hours: 0800-1630 Monday to Thursday and 0800-1300 Fridays

## **Emergency services numbers**

- The police can be contacted on 192, ambulance 194 and the fire brigade on 193.

Published 15 March 2022

---

## **[UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement for the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities](#)**

World news story

The UK welcomed the report and panel discussion during the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities.



# UK Government

Thank you, Mr President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the report and panel discussion.

In February 2022, we published our FCDO disability inclusion and rights strategy 2022 to 2030, 'Building an inclusive future for all: a sustainable rights-based approach'.

In the strategy we made a number of commitments, which are in line with the report's recommendations. For example, we will work with other states and partners to strengthen capacity to collect, analyse, and use quality disaggregated data. We will also encourage integration of the Washington Group questions on disability into household surveys, information and monitoring and evaluation systems.

This is critical to understand and address of the needs of disabled people and their households and the barriers to access, in order to better design and adapt policies and programmes so they are more accessible and effective.

Regarding the report's recommendations in humanitarian contexts, the UK is committed to ensuring humanitarian response efforts become more inclusive and we will continue to promote the routine, systematic collection and use of disaggregated data. Our top achievement here has been the design, delivery and dissemination of e-learning on how to use the Washington Group questions in humanitarian settings.

Distinguished panellists,

What more can states do to ensure that data on the needs and priorities of disabled people is translated into response plans in humanitarian contexts?

Published 15 March 2022

---

## [Outdoor civil weddings and civil partnerships made permanent](#)

Press release

Outdoor weddings at licenced venues in England and Wales will be legalised permanently after the change received overwhelming support from the public, faith groups and the wedding industry.



Photo: Brad Wakefield Photography

- Temporary measures introduced during the pandemic will continue indefinitely.
- Move will provide greater flexibility and choice to couples and the wedding sector.
- Over 90% of people back permanent legalisation of outdoor weddings.

It will mean that marrying couples will continue to have greater choice in how they celebrate their big day. Temporary legislation allowing outdoor civil weddings and partnerships for the first time has been in place since last summer.

A government consultation found that 96% of respondents backed making this change permanent, while 93% supported extending it to religious weddings. Ministers will lay legislation today to legalise outdoor civil weddings and partnerships indefinitely. Reforms to religious ceremonies will be made in due course after the consultation found every major faith group supported the move.

Prior to last summer, civil ceremonies at a licensed wedding venue had to take place indoors or within a permanent outdoor structure, such as a bandstand.

Couples can now have the whole ceremony outside in the venue's grounds – providing them with greater flexibility and choice, as well as boosting the recovery of the wedding sector which saw many ceremonies postponed during the pandemic.

The move gives the wedding industry the certainty needed to invest in their services and locations for ceremonies before the end of the temporary legislation in April.

Justice Minister Tom Pursglove MP said:

A wedding is one of the most important days in a person's life and it is right that couples should have greater choice in how they celebrate their special occasion.

These reforms will allow couples to hold more personalised ceremonies and provide a welcome boost for the wedding sector.

An ongoing Law Commission report into marriage laws is due to be published in July and the government will carefully consider the recommendations once received. This report is exploring how to modernise and improve marriage law into a simple, fair and consistent legal structure. This includes widening the locations that people can get married at and whether more types of weddings should be legalised.

The government will set out its plans to legalise outdoor religious weddings in due course as this will require changes to primary legislation.

- These changes are being introduced on the 15th March via the laying of a Statutory Instrument (SI) which amends the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 to allow legal outdoor civil weddings and civil partnership registrations to take place within the grounds of Approved Premises.
- 93% of respondents to the consultation also supported the proposal to permit outdoor religious ceremonies in the grounds of places of worship, as long as this is permitted by the respective religious bodies. Religious groups who responded to the consultation noted that while there was no theological obligation to conduct a wedding within the curtilage of a church, these changes must be permissive in nature, and that existing protections to safeguard religious freedoms need to remain. All representatives of religious groups who responded to the consultation were in support of this proposal. These changes would require amendments to primary legislation and the associated procedural requirements are such that it is not possible to legislate within the



same timeframe as this SI. This would allow marriages to take place in the grounds of religious buildings, such as outside of churches.

- The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 will come into force on the 6th April 2022.
- The regulations apply only to Approved Premises – the changes cannot enable outdoor weddings to take place on religious premises or in outdoor areas that are not part of the grounds of Approved Premises.
- In order to hold legal outdoor weddings and civil partnership registrations, a venue must be an Approved Premises or must become an Approved Premises under the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005, as amended.
- Before the temporary changes were introduced last summer, premises could only be approved if they were a permanently immovable structure (or any boat or other permanently moored vessel) comprising at least one room which is to be approved for civil weddings and civil partnership registration.
- Existing Approved Premises will be permitted to use any outdoor areas in the venue for civil wedding and civil partnership registrations without having to re-apply for approval, subject to certain conditions.
- Ceremonies will now be able to take place fully outdoors or under a partially covered structure. The location for the ceremony within the outdoor areas must be assessed to be seemly and dignified. Other requirements for public access and signage must also be met.
- With the exception of Jewish and Quaker weddings, which for historical reasons can already take place outdoors, legal religious weddings will continue to take place in certified places of worship which are also registered for marriage, or churches and chapels of the Church of England or Church in Wales. The government will however work to take forward the proposals to extend provision to outdoor religious ceremonies. In due course, the government will put forward a Legislative Review Order to allow for outdoor religious weddings; this is since such a change would require an amendment to primary legislation.