

More than 63,500 file Self Assessment on first day of tax year

More than 63,500 customers filed their 2020 to 2021 tax return online on 6 April 2021, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has revealed.

And with almost 950,000 online Self Assessment returns received so far this tax year, HMRC is urging others to do the same and file their tax returns early. Each year, thousands of people choose to file early, as soon as one tax year ends and the new one starts.

HMRC has seen a growing trend in early filers. In the last 5 tax years, the number of customers choosing to file on the first day of the new tax year has almost trebled from 22,885 in 2017 to 63,521 in 2021.

HMRC has today, published information to help customers file early – how to do it, what the benefits are, and what they need to get started.

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

There are many advantages to completing your Self Assessment tax return sooner rather than later, not least that if you're due tax refund you'll get the money within a few days.

Our new online guide helps answer many of the questions customers have about Self Assessment. Go to GOV.UK and search 'file your tax return early'.

The [Self Assessment guide](#) will help customers navigate through the tax return process. Customers do not need to wait to submit their Self Assessment, they can file at a time that suits them and avoid any last-minute rush to meet the deadline on 31 January 2022.

It includes helpful information on:

- how to get help with your tax return
- what to do when declaring furlough payments, Self-employed Income Support Scheme grants or other COVID-19 support measures
- what information you need before you can start your tax return
- help with paying your bill
- what to do if you have paid too much tax

HMRC recognises that the pandemic has been a worrying time for Self Assessment customers and is doing all it can to support them accurately file their tax returns and meet their obligations. In addition to the factsheet, [guidance and help sheets are available on GOV.UK](#).

Customers should also be aware of copycat HMRC websites and phishing scams.

They should search 'self assessment' on GOV.UK to get the correct link for their Self Assessment tax return online securely and free of charge.

They also need to be alert if someone calls, emails or texts claiming to be from HMRC, asking for bank or other personal details, threatening arrest or demanding a money transfer. It might be a scam. Anyone who is unsure can use [the checklist on GOV.UK](#) to help them decide if the contact they received is a scam.

Visit GOV.UK for more information about [Self Assessment](#).

There have been 934,501 online Self Assessment tax returns for the 2020 to 2021 tax year, as at 17 May 2021.

Figures for the number of online Self Assessment filers on 6 April for the last 5 tax years.

Date	Online returns received (and corresponding tax year)
06/04/2017	22,885 (2016/17)
06/04/2018	36,939 (2017/18)
06/04/2019	35,255 (2018/19)
06/04/2020	96,519 (2019/20)
06/04/2021	63,521 (2020/21)

[Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Egypt: Gareth Bayley](#)

Press release

Mr Gareth Bayley OBE has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt in succession to Sir Geoffrey Adams KCMG who will be retiring from the Diplomatic Service. Mr Bayley will take up his appointment during September 2021.



Curriculum vitae

Full name: Gareth Bayley

Married to: Sara Fawcett MBE

Dates	Role
2017 to 2021	FCD0, Director, South Asia and Afghanistan Directorate; Prime Minister's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan; Deputy Senior Responsible Owner, National Strategy Implementation Group South Asia
2014 to 2017	FCO, UK Special Representative for Syria
2014	FCO, Additional Director, Eastern Europe and Central Asia Directorate
2011 to 2014	FCO, Deputy Head then Acting Head, Conflict Department
2010 to 2011	Princeton University, Mid-Career Fellow Public Policy
2009 to 2010	Office of the Quartet Representative, Chief of Staff to Quartet Representative
2008 to 2009	UK Mission to UN New York, Deputy Head – Political
2006 to 2008	UK Mission to UN New York, Head, Middle East / New Threats – Political
2005 to 2006	FCO, Deputy Head, Iraq Policy Unit
2004 to 2005	Baghdad, First Secretary – Political
2004	Baghdad, Spokesperson, Coalition Provisional Authority
2002 to 2004	FCO, Deputy European Correspondent, Common Foreign and Security Policy Group
2002	Kabul, First Secretary – Political
1998 to 2002	Cairo, Second Secretary – Political/Press
1996 to 1998	Full-time Language Training (Arabic)
1995 to 1996	FCO, Desk Officer, South Africa Team)
1995	Joined FCO

Newsdesk

All the latest FCD0 news is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

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[PPE contract legal challenge](#)

Since this unprecedented global pandemic erupted our absolute priority

throughout has always been saving lives. In a highly competitive global market, where many countries placed export bans on personal protective equipment (PPE), we delivered over 11 billion items of PPE to protect our frontline workers, including:

- 1.7 billion Type IIR face masks
- 100 million FFP3 face masks
- 48 million gowns
- 6.9 billion gloves

This vital supply helped keep the NHS open at a moment of national crisis and enabled it to deliver a world-class service to the public.

Globally there were significant logistical challenges in sourcing, procuring and distributing PPE. The rapid rise in international infection rates during the early stages of the pandemic created unparalleled demand for PPE.

We set up, from scratch, a new parallel supply chain to procure, manage and distribute life-saving PPE. This was an enormous cross-government effort, drawing upon expertise from a number of departments together with fantastic support from the military and private sector partners. Officials worked day and night to secure these contracts. We prioritised procurement and we make no apology for that.

As the 2020 National Audit Office (NAO) report recognised, all of the NHS providers they spoke to were always able to get what they needed in time. This was thanks to the collective efforts of government, the NHS, armed forces, civil servants and industry.

In this unique situation, we had to change how we approached risk. The risks that the contracts might not perform needed to be balanced against the risk to the health of frontline workers, the NHS and the public if we failed to get the PPE we so desperately needed.

Decisions on whether to award contracts for PPE are taken by officials and the NAO found no evidence ministers were involved in procurement decisions.

Good Law Project is challenging the Department of Health and Social Care on whether the government acted lawfully in awarding specific contracts. These legal proceedings relate to just 9 of the 332 PPE contracts the department signed during a period of extremely high and urgent need.

The claims must also be balanced with the success of a programme since the beginning of the pandemic:

- In April 2020, we issued a call to arms for new suppliers of PPE. We received an extraordinary response and are grateful to all those who rose to the challenge. These offers were prioritised on the speed for getting PPE to the frontline, to keep people safe, and the scale a supplier could deliver
- To date we have delivered over 11 billion items of PPE to the frontline
- The delivery of billions of items of PPE has been possible largely due to the creation of the [PPE portal](#), our online platform developed and

delivered through the Department of Health and Social Care partnering with eBay, Clipper Logistics, Royal Mail, the NHS, Volo and the military. To date, we have delivered 2.8 billion items of PPE through the portal. We established a 4-month stockpile of PPE across all major categories, by the end of November 2020

The government continues to fight this pandemic and that should not be forgotten. Over the course of April 2021, we distributed 1 billion items of PPE to the health and social care sector while helping to reopen society. This includes providing masks to allow the safe reopening of schools and to ensure people had access to these at polling stations.

We are committed to transparency. Ahead of the legal proceedings, we are making the Department of Health and Social Care's [skeleton argument available](#).

To save lives, we focused our efforts, our resources and our attention on sourcing PPE. We stand by our efforts to prioritise protecting frontline workers and citizens.

New GAD case studies

News story

Our latest case studies give an insight into the variety of projects that people from GAD have delivered over the past year.



The extent of work which the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) undertakes is featured in a new set of case studies. These depict the projects and success which people in GAD have delivered over the past year.

Completed case studies

Among the issues we explore are the:

Support levels

The Head of Business Development, Ian Rogers said: “These case studies show the breadth of experience and the wide range of issues which we cover.

“We are able to demonstrate the different kinds of support available from GAD to our clients in government and the public sector.”

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Bathing water season begins

The bathing water season started on Saturday 15 May with the Environment Agency carrying out regular testing of water quality at designated bathing sites until the end of September.

High standards of water quality at swimming locations are important for people’s enjoyment of beaches and other beauty spots in England.

Throughout the bathing season the Environment Agency will issue warnings of any forecasted pollution risk on its [Swimfo website](#) covering over 170 sites. Signs are also put up at these swimming locations to inform bathers about any possible dips in quality as a result of factors like rainfall, wind and high tides.

In the autumn the Environment Agency will publish its classifications – Sufficient, Good, Excellent or Poor – for each designated bathing water site.

The long-term trend for bathing water quality in England remains upward and overall quality is high. In 2019 98.3% of bathing waters achieved the minimum standard of Sufficient. Of these, 93% achieved the highest standards of Excellent or Good.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

“High quality bathing waters benefit health and wellbeing and boost local economies. There were 135 million day visits taken to the seaside in England in 2019, which combined with overnight stays were worth £8.1 billion to the economy, so following the winter lockdown we have every reason to look forward to a Great British Summer this year.

“The high standards in bathing waters on the coast have taken significant investment and decades of hard graft. Now we’ll coordinate similar effort following the ground-breaking decision to designate a stretch of the River Wharfe as a bathing river. This will require collaboration and innovation to reduce pollution and improve the local environment. It will be difficult but

should be achievable and provide learning we can apply to other rivers in the future.”

The [Swimfo: Find a Bathing Water](#) website provides immediate access to information on over 400 designated bathing waters including coastal locations, inland lakes and the newly designated area of the River Wharfe in Yorkshire. Knowing more about bathing water quality and the range and location of designated sites can help people get the most out of their visit.

Individual actions count

Actions in the home can have a damaging impact on our rivers and coasts. Pouring fats, oils and greases down the sink, and flushing wet wipes and other plastic products down the loo can cause blockages in our sewers that damage our environment. Putting them in the bin instead helps to protect water quality.