

[‘Tell the GCA’ launched for confidential reporting of Code issues](#)

News story

The GCA has launched a confidential reporting platform ‘Tell the GCA’



Groceries suppliers can now use a confidential platform to report to the GCA any behaviour by a designated retailer they believe to be in breach of the Groceries Supply Code of Practice.

'Tell the GCA' has been designed to dispel concerns harboured by some suppliers that their identities could be revealed if they provide information. They can now report an issue via the secure third-party platform in total confidence that the information they share can remain anonymous.

Suppliers or other interested parties who log on to www.telltheGCA.co.uk will find a simple form that asks them to describe their Code-related concern, the retailer or retailers to which it applies and the date of the event in question. They will be asked to choose whether to remain anonymous or provide personal details.

They are also asked to open a secure post box on the platform so, even without their contact details, the GCA can post questions if more information is needed to take action. Suppliers who do so will be given a case number and choose a password so they can log in securely to check if the GCA has posted any questions or provided any update.

Mark White, the GCA, said: "This platform is not intended as a replacement for suppliers contacting the GCA directly, if that is what they want. My door is always open to suppliers and I encourage them to bring information to me and my office.

"I will always treat that information in confidence but for those suppliers who want additional reassurance they can use 'Tell the GCA' to share their information."

[UK supports Brazilian females to grow their tech-based businesses](#)

Applications are officially open for the Future Females Business School, an initiative offered by the British Government in Brazil through the International Tech Hub Network. The programme will support 50 Brazilian female founders of tech-based enterprises to start, grow, scale, and become more sustainable, promoting positive social, economic or environmental impact.

The Future Females Business School Programme is a three month virtual programme, equipping local female entrepreneurs with the entrepreneurial skills and best practices needed to start and grow successful and sustainable businesses, that utilise technology to not only generate wealth for themselves, but to have a positive impact in their community, and environment.

Women are underrepresented in the Brazilian technology and innovation ecosystems. According to the Brazilian Association of Startups, only 15% of Brazilian startups have female founders, and these companies receive less than 3% of all VC funds. Also only 3% of Brazilian SMEs reach international markets, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, which excludes the vast majority of Brazilian entrepreneurs from the benefits of increased productivity, competitiveness, and revenue. The Future Females programme will help Brazilian women to change these numbers, connecting entrepreneurs to a supporting global network of successful business owners, mentors, investors and experts.

Future Females has previously partnered with the UK-South Africa Tech Hub in 2018, supporting 200+ female entrepreneurs to date, with participants seeing 88% increase in digital skills development, 95% uplift in confidence, and on average a 168% revenue increase in their businesses. In 2020, Future Females also ran pilot programmes in partnership with UK-Kenya Tech Hub and UK-Nigeria Tech Hub.

“We are very excited to expand our Future Females Business School into Brazil, in partnership with UK-Brazil Tech Hub – to allow women from all over the country to gain confidence, practical digital skills, and access the mentoring and community support needed to bring their dream business to life. The entrepreneurs who participate in our programmes are not just building businesses – they’re creating innovative solutions to real problems we’re facing in this ‘new’ world, and act as a source of hope for their communities – and we can’t wait to meet them!” – Lauren Dallas, Co-Founder & CEO of Future Females.

“Diversity drives innovation as it is ‘sine qua non’ to creating solutions that address problems from multiple perspectives. Including more women as leaders of change in technology is paramount to fostering innovative solutions to Brazil’s most urgent challenges, from those we are facing as a result of the COVID-19 crisis to climate change, poverty and inequality. Enabling women to transform great ideas into positive social, economic and environmental impact through digital technology is key to lead a profound country transformation into prosperity in Brazil. We are very happy to partner with Future Females to empower Brazilian women to become enablers of change in the local and global digital economy” – Andrea Motta, Director of the UK Brazil Tech Hub.

“I’m delighted with this new partnership between the UK Government and the Future Females Business School, an impressive programme with huge global reach. The partnership reinforces our commitment to work together to tackle gender inequality, promote digital inclusion, create jobs and foster a vibrant digital economy capable of building back better from COVID-19” – Liz Davidson, Chargé d’Affairs of the British Government in Brazil.

Applications are open until 22 February 2021, with only 50 places available in the three-month pilot programme commencing on 8 March 2021.

[Apply now](#)

Who is this programme for?

This programme is for Brazilian female entrepreneurs with an early-stage tech-based business or business idea that aims at creating positive social, economic or environmental impact, reducing poverty, inequality or protecting the environment. The programme is gender inclusive, encouraging cisgender women, transgender and non-binary people to apply. Male founders and co-founders supporting women digital entrepreneurship are welcome. The pilot cohort will be conducted in English and language proficiency is required.

What’s included in the programme?

The Future Females Business School, in partnership with UK-Brazil Tech Hub is a 3 month programme, made up of 10 modules that step entrepreneurs through the fundamental building blocks of starting and growing a business. Members will learn how to write an effective business plan, how to find and reach their ideal customers and how to use technology to build their online presence and scale. The programme also features guest experts – serial entrepreneurs, executives, coaches – who cover critical personal development topics such as how to overcome fear of failure, and how to uncover your true passion.

The programme is delivered online, and will have a virtual graduation event at the end, where completion certificates will be awarded, with all members invited to attend – to network, meet the team, and celebrate their achievements and their businesses!

Who is the International Tech Hub Network?

The International Tech Hub Network (ITHN) is a UK Government initiative to stimulate innovation and technology on a local level through forging partnerships between international tech sectors and the UK, stimulating local digital economies and building digital skills. The programme operates in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Indonesia, India, Israel and Brazil. The UK-Brazil Tech Hub has been established as part of the UK's Digital Access Programme (DAP), a UK Government Prosperity Fund initiative. The UK-Brazil Tech Hub aims to develop a stronger Brazilian digital ecosystem through the development of skills, entrepreneurship and business partnerships.

Who is Future Females?

Future Females is a movement that exists to increase the number of and better support the success of female entrepreneurs. Future Females has shown immense growth since its conception in August 2017 in Cape Town, currently boasting a presence in 36 locations world-wide, hosting regular events for their engaged community of over 80,000 members, and offering the Future Females Business School online training programme.

How to apply?

Applications are now open for the Future Females Business School, in partnership with UK-Brazil Tech Hub.

The application starts with simply completing a form and sharing information about the business you are building, with successful candidates being invited to a 1:1 interview with a programme team member. This interview will help you validate your business idea and direction, and ensure this programme is the best fit for you!

Applications are open until 22 February 2021, with only 50 spots available in the three month pilot programme commencing on 8 March 2021.

[Apply now](#)

10.7 million tax returns filed by 31 January deadline

More than 10.7 million people submitted their 2019/20 Self Assessment tax returns by the 31 January deadline, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has revealed.

The remaining 1.8 million whose tax return is now late will not be charged a late filing penalty provided they submit their return online by 28 February.

Those who did not pay their Self Assessment tax bill by 31 January are now incurring interest on the outstanding balance and should pay their bill as soon as possible.

Customers should pay any outstanding balance, or arrange a payment plan, before 3 March 2021 to avoid a 5% late payment penalty.

Those who are not yet able to file their tax return should pay an estimated amount as soon as possible, which will minimise any interest and late payment penalty. Self-employed people can [use the calculator on GOV.UK](#) to help estimate their tax bill.

Karl Khan, HMRC's Interim Director General for Customer Services, said:

Thank you to the 10.7 million customers who have sent in their tax returns.

We won't send anyone a late filing penalty if they complete their tax return by 28 February.

We know that many individuals and small businesses are finding it harder to pay this year, due to the pandemic. Anyone who can't afford to pay their tax bill in full can set up a payment plan, once they've filed their return, to spread their tax bill into monthly instalments.

There are several ways that customers can pay their Self Assessment tax bill or an estimated amount. They can pay online, via their bank, or by post. More information on [how to pay](#) is on GOV.UK.

Anyone who cannot pay their bill in full can apply to spread the cost. Customers can set up a payment plan, in up to 12 monthly instalments, [online via GOV.UK](#) provided they meet the following requirements:

- they need to have no:
 - outstanding tax returns
 - other tax debts
 - other HMRC payment plans set up
- the debt needs to be between £2 and £30,000
- the payment plan needs to be set up no later than 60 days after the due date for payment – but they should really do it as soon as possible, and certainly before 3 March to avoid a 5% late payment penalty

Those who do not meet these requirements, or who need more than 12 months to pay off their bill, can apply for a payment plan by speaking to one of HMRC's debt advisers.

Interest accrues on all outstanding balances, including those in payment

plans.

Self Assessment customers who are required to make Payments on Account, and know their 2020 to 2021 tax bill is going to be lower than in 2019 to 2020 – for example due to loss of earnings because of COVID-19, can reduce their Payments on Account. Find out [more about Payments on Account and how to reduce them](#).

Be aware of copycat HMRC websites and phishing scams. Customers 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, saying that they can claim financial help, are due a tax refund or owe tax. It might be a scam. Check GOV.UK for [information on how to recognise genuine HMRC contact](#).

Self Assessment 2021 facts summary:

- 12.1 million SA returns due
- 10,743,387 returns received by 31 January – this includes Expected Returns, unsolicited returns and Late Registrations
- 10,351,387 Expected Returns received by 31 January (85.25% of returns expected)
- 392,000 unsolicited returns/Late Registrations (3.65%)
- 1,790,368 taxpayers missed the deadline (14.74%)
- 10,274,940 returns were filed online (95.64% of total filed)

Unsolicited returns/late registrations are an estimate based on returns received by early January and previous filing behaviour. The unusual filing patterns this year means that the final figure for 31 January may be lower.

Find [more information on Self Assessment tax returns](#).

We will not charge late filing penalties for SA700s and SA970s received in February. These returns can only be filed on paper.

For SA800s and SA900s we will not charge a late filing penalty if customers file online by the end of February 2021. The deadline for filing SA800s and SA900s on paper was 31 October 2020. Customers who file late on paper will be charged a late filing penalty in the normal way. They can appeal against this penalty if they have a reasonable excuse for filing their paper return late.

There is no change to the filing deadline and other obligations are not affected. A return received online in February will be treated as a return received late where there is a valid reasonable excuse for the lateness. This means that:

- there will be an extended enquiry window
- for returns filed after 28 February the other late filing penalties (daily penalties from 3 months, 6 and 12 month penalties) will operate as usual
- the payment deadline remains 31 January and interest will be charged on late payment. The current rate of late payment interest is 2.6%
- a 5% late payment penalty will be charged if tax remains outstanding,

and a payment plan has not been set up, before 3 March 2021 – further late payment penalties are charged at 6 and 12 months, on tax outstanding where a payment plan has not been set up

The calculator to help estimate self-employed individuals' tax bills assumes they have no other taxable income and receive the standard personal allowance. Also, it does not take into account any payments they may have made as payments on account

If a customer's Self Assessment debts are more than £30,000, or they need longer than 12 months to pay a debt in full, they cannot set up a Time to Pay plan online. But they may still be able to set up a Time to Pay arrangement by calling the Self Assessment Payment Helpline on 0300 200 3822.

Follow the National Cyber Security Centre's six essential steps to keep yourself and your business secure online by visiting [CyberAware.gov.uk](https://www.cyberaware.gov.uk).

[New inspector appointed for police forces and fire services](#)

News story

The Home Office has appointed a new inspector to lead on investigations for Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).



Andrew Cooke QPM will take up the posts on Monday 12 April 2021.

Mr Cooke has been appointed to take up the dual roles of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Inspector of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England, overseeing inspections primarily in the North of England.

Mr Cooke has worked in UK policing and law enforcement for nearly 36 years, where the majority of his service has been with Merseyside Police. He served

at every rank with the force, being appointed to Chief Constable in 2017.

During that time he also served as Assistant Chief Constable at Lancashire Constabulary for a period and became the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for the United Kingdom Protected Persons Service.

In 2019 he became the national lead for Crime Operations.

Mr Cooke has also been commended on 10 occasions and was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in 2014.

Mr Cooke said:

Although I am leaving what has been for me a vocational career as a serving police officer in an exceptional police force, I am proud to have been appointed by Her Majesty to the Inspectorate.

I look forward to working with my new colleagues and both the police and fire services to further improve public safety.

Mr Cooke was selected following a stringent recruitment process, which followed the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) Code of Practice.

The selection panel was led by an independent chair, Olivia Grant OBE, and also included a Home Office Non-Executive Director (Michael Fuller QPM), a senior civil servant and Sir Thomas Winsor, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England.

HMICFRS inspectors are then appointed by HM The Queen on the advice of the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister.

Published 1 February 2021

Formal Request to Commence UK Accession Negotiations to CPTPP

Dear Minister O'Connor,

As the Minister of Trade in New Zealand, the depositary nation of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, and with reference to Article 5: 'Accession' of the CPTPP treaty text, I am writing to you on behalf of the United Kingdom to formally request the commencement of negotiations on UK accession to CPTPP.

Accession to CPTPP is a priority for the UK government and a key part of our trade negotiations programme as a newly independent trading nation. CPTPP is one of the most important free trade areas in the world and UK accession could see CPTPP's proportion of global GDP rise to 16%. UK membership would also be the first step in expanding this influential and modern trade network of 11 dynamic economies beyond the Indo-Pacific region and Americas.

The UK shares the CPTPP's commitment to free trade and welcomes the high standards of this ambitious agreement. The UK will comply fully with the process set out in the commission decision of January 2019 on the Accession Process of the CPTPP. I believe UK membership would send a powerful signal about the importance placed on free trade by this dynamic group of countries at this critical time in our history.

In line with the accession process you have set out for aspirant economies, over the last two years, the UK has actively engaged with all 11 Signatories at both ministerial and official level to discuss UK accession to CPTPP. I am delighted that all CPTPP members have welcomed our interest in accession.

CPTPP membership will complement and reinforce new and enhanced bilateral trade agreements we have already signed or are negotiating now – with Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. We believe our strong bilateral trade relationships with CPTPP members, including with Brunei and Malaysia, provide an effective springboard to our CPTPP accession.

We would now like to formalise our request to commence accession negotiations. I hope you will consider our request favourably and we stand ready to engage with you in order to establish a Working Group and to agree a timetable to negotiate the UK's accession. The UK will publish its outline approach, scoping analysis, and response to our public consultation before we begin negotiations. I look forward to working with you and the CPTPP members.

Best wishes,

THE RT HON ELIZABETH TRUSS MP

Secretary of State for International Trade
& President of the Board of Trade