

# 'We've been Santa lot of Elf Assessments' says HMRC

Completing a tax return may not be on the top of your to-do list on Christmas Day, but that didn't stop 3,003 taxpayers from filing their Self Assessment returns on 25 December.

For some customers, doing their tax return on Christmas Day is as traditional as enjoying the festivities with family and friends, or grabbing a bargain in the Boxing Day sales. This year, the peak time was between 12:00 and 12:59, when more than 245 customers filed.

Angela MacDonald, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

Whether you squeezed it in before tucking into a Christmas pudding, after the Queen's Speech, or trying to grab a bargain during the festive sales, our [online service](#) is available for you to file your tax return at any time you wish.

More than 11 million customers are expected to complete a 2018 to 2019 Self Assessment tax return form by 31 January 2020.

The number of tax returns filed during the festive period were:

25 December (total 3,003)

- 00.00 to 08.00: 248
- 08.01 to 16.00: 1,458
- 16.01 to 00.00: 1,297

26 December (total 9,254)

- 00.00 to 08.00: 380
- 08.01 to 16.00: 5,115
- 16.01 to 00.00: 3,759

For customers who are yet to start their 2018 to 2019 Self Assessment, films and webinars can take them through each stage of the process, with bespoke guidance for individuals' varying circumstances. Help is also available on [GOV.UK](#), on social media, or from the Self Assessment helpline on 0300 200 3310.

If customers completed a Self Assessment tax return last year but didn't have any tax to pay, they still need to complete a 2018 to 2019 tax return, unless HMRC has written to them to say that it is not required.

1. Key filing figures:

- 3,003 taxpayers filed on 25 December 2019
  - peak filing hour on 25 December was 12-1pm (245 tax returns were filed)
  - 9,254 taxpayers filed on 26 December 2019
  - peak filing hour on 26 December was 12 to 1pm (946 tax returns were filed)
  - 22,035 taxpayers filed on 24 December 2019
2. Self Assessment guidance is available [online](#)
  3. Between 30 January, and 31 January, our phone helplines shut at 8pm. Customers can contact us via Webchat until midnight both days
  4. 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.
  5. Be aware of copycat websites and phishing scams – always type in the full online address <http://www.gov.uk/hmrc> to obtain the correct link to file your Self Assessment return online securely and free of charge.
  6. HMRC uses your home address to determine whether you should be paying UK or Welsh/Scottish Rate of Income Tax, make sure yours is up to date by accessing your Personal Tax Account or <https://www.gov.uk/tell-hmrc-change-of-details>.
  7. Customers can also register for HMRC's help and support [email service](#) or by going to GOV.UK and searching 'HMRC videos, webinars and email alerts'.
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## [Free hospital parking for thousands of patients, staff and carers](#)

Thousands of NHS patients and visitors in England will be able to access free hospital car parking under a new approach set out by Health Secretary Matt Hancock today.

The government will also consider car parking capacity across the country, and how improved technology will reduce burdens for hospitals and take away stress for visitors.

Currently, NHS trusts are responsible for making their own car parking arrangements, including setting any charges. Any profits from car parking charges must be reinvested into frontline care.

From April, all 206 hospital trusts in England will be expected to provide free car parking to groups that may be frequent hospital visitors, or those disproportionately impacted by daily or hourly charges for parking, including:

- blue badge holders
- frequent outpatients who have to attend regular appointments to manage long-term conditions

Free parking will also be offered at specific times of day to certain groups, including:

- parents of sick children staying in hospital overnight
- staff working night shifts

The government will work with the NHS and others to ensure that it:

- spreads existing good practice from NHS organisations applying current exemptions effectively to others
- uses the NHS standard contract if needed to ensure compliance
- assesses where capital investment could help to improve the experience of patients and visitors

Technology has helped a number of trusts to improve their parking, and the Department of Health and Social Care will work with the NHS in the coming months to identify and spread practical parking options that can make the most difference quickly. These could include:

- Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems, which use camera technology to scan car number plates
- ticket or token systems where eligible people can then redeem free parking, or receive a refund

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This month millions of people put their trust in this government to deliver. One of the concerns mentioned regularly on the doorsteps was that vulnerable people, and staff working nights, have to pay for hospital car parking. So we are today delivering on our manifesto commitment and setting out our new approach to NHS hospital parking charges.

Currently, the situation varies from hospital to hospital. Instead, from April, across the country those with the greatest need – such as disabled people, parents staying overnight with sick children in hospital, and NHS staff working nightshifts – will no longer have to pay for parking.

This is yet another example of how this government is delivering on our promises and focusing on the people's priorities.

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# Passengers to plan journeys down to the minute as big data revitalises country's bus use

- government brings buses into the digital age with open data project to improve passenger journeys across England
- information on routes, timetables, location and fares will be easier to access to make bus travel more convenient
- the Bus Open Data Service will be launched in early 2020

Bus passengers across England will soon be able to plan their journeys down to the minute thanks to a pioneering project to collate and share bus location data.

Buses Minister Baroness Vere has announced a ground-breaking project to standardise and publish information from operators, which will enable bus users to plan routes, estimate journey times and understand costs in advance. It will also provide real-time bus location data so that passengers can travel with confidence. Information on routes and timetables will be available from early 2020, followed by location and fares data by 2021, encouraging more people to choose buses by making them easier to use than ever.

Developers will be able to add the information into existing apps or develop new products to improve connectivity for communities and encourage more people turn to public transport.

Buses Minister, Baroness Vere, said:

Buses are the most frequently used form of public transport – to get to work, to the library, to the doctors or to see family and friends.

By harnessing the transforming power of data and technology we could be on the threshold of a golden age for buses. Sharing data on routes, bus locations and fares will give passengers even more confidence to ride.

Only half of bus users think that it is easy to stay up to date with timetables and fares, impacting the number of journeys taken and the user experience, according to Transport Focus.

The Bus Open Data Service will be underpinned by new regulations which will mean bus operators are legally required to provide route and timetable data by the end of 2020 and fare, ticket and location data by 2021.

The new regulations will make it easier for people to use the bus to visit friends, commute to work or get out and about in their local community by providing live information on location, and helping to keep fares down by providing greater transparency across different operators.

David Sidebottom, director, Transport Focus, said:

Making it easier for passengers to find bus times and fares is good news. Ensuring that information is accurate and timely will be crucial to the success of the open data service.

The government will work with technology companies, app developers and information providers to ensure a range of innovative products are designed to make the most of the data and help all bus users make informed choices.

Full data on fares and locations will be available from January 2021, by which point it is expected that a range of apps will be on the market, allowing passengers to manage their journeys from start to finish from their smartphones.

David Beardmore, commercial director, Open Data Institute, said:

Having been involved in the bus open data programme from the start, we're delighted to see this significant step forward with the launch of the bus open data service in early 2020 as planned.

This marks the start of a digital transformation for the delivery of bus services across England and will benefit both the tech industry who will use the data to innovate and develop new products and services, but fundamentally consumers are the ultimate winners; armed with better information they can plan their journeys more easily and make better choices about tickets.

This follows the [government's recent announcement of new low-fare, high-frequency 'Superbus' networks](#), Britain's first all-electric bus town and contactless payments on every city bus.

The package is worth £220 million in the first year, and will create 'express lanes' for buses in the West Midlands and elsewhere, and will invest in new ways of providing more frequent public transport in the countryside and other places where conventional buses have dwindled or disappeared.

The government has also committed to the UK's first-ever long-term bus strategy and funding settlement, including support for councils who want to create London-style franchised services in their areas.

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## £1 million funding boost for South Yorkshire flood charity

- Communities Secretary pledges extra funding to help vulnerable people affected by recent floods
- South Yorkshire Disaster Relief Fund to receive up to £1 million match funding, with an additional £300,000 for other affected areas
- Environment Secretary announces review into insurance cover following recent flooding

A charity helping vulnerable people affected by flooding in South Yorkshire will get a £1 million boost, Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick announced today (27 December 2019).

This new funding builds on the support that government has already provided to help people and businesses affected by flooding across England in November 2019.

It is expected to help those families and homeowners in South Yorkshire who have been most affected by the flooding and face considerable hardship as a result.

Praising the incredible efforts of charities, volunteers and local communities who have come together to help the area recover, Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP confirmed the government will match the funds raised by the South Yorkshire Flood Disaster Relief Appeal Fund up to the value of £1 million.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

The flooding in South Yorkshire this winter has been devastating for families. However, when I visited Bentley, in Doncaster, I was humbled by the incredible strength of community spirit.

Along with the hard work of the emergency services, the response from charities and volunteers has been outstanding.

From helping with the immediate emergency response, to providing temporary accommodation and getting people the legal and financial advice they need, this support has been crucial to these hard-hit communities.

But more support is still needed, which is why we're matching money raised by the South Yorkshire Flood Disaster Relief Appeal Fund pound for pound, to further help vulnerable people facing hardship to recover and get back on their feet.

It has also been confirmed that the government will investigate the extent to which those affected by flooding did not have sufficient insurance cover.

Further information about the review will be published in the new year. It will help to identify any implications for future flood events.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

We have listened to communities that have been affected by flooding and understand just how important it is to ensure that everyone is able to access sufficient insurance cover.

That's why we will be reviewing insurance cover following the recent flooding to understand any lessons to be learned for the future.

The South Yorkshire Flood Disaster Relief Appeal Fund has raised over £500,000 already, with the government pledging to match all funds raised up to the value of £1 million.

The government has also pledged a further £300,000 of match-funding for other eligible areas affected by recent flooding, and where a flooding framework has been activated.

Today's announcement builds on support the government has already provided to help those affected by recent flooding. This includes:

- Up to £5,000 made available for flood-hit homes and businesses in eligible areas to help make their properties more resilient to future flooding.
- Community Recovery Grants for local councils to help households recover.
- Business Recovery Grants for eligible small and medium-sized businesses that have suffered severe impacts from the floods.
- Activated the emergency Bellwin Scheme, under which local authorities dealing with the flooding could apply to have 100% of their eligible costs – above a threshold – reimbursed by the government.
- Council Tax and Business Rate Relief for affected homes and businesses.

The government has provided the same level of support to communities affected by the November 2019 floods as it did for those affected by the 2015 floods when 17,000 homes and 4,000 businesses were affected.

You can donate to the [South Yorkshire Flood Disaster Relief Appeal Fund](#).

## **Match funding**

The South Yorkshire Flood Disaster Relief Appeal Fund was set up by the South Yorkshire Community Foundation to support people who have been displaced from their homes and had their property damaged by severe flood waters.

The funding will match charitable contributions made to the South Yorkshire Flood Disaster Relief Appeal Fund and will prioritise the individuals and families who are suffering hardship following the flooding.

## **Insurance review**

In 2016, the government established the Flood Re scheme, a joint initiative between government and industry. Over 20 million households now have buildings insurance that covers flood risk and the introduction of Flood Re has seen 4 out of 5 households with a previous flood claim getting price reductions of more than 50% for their insurance.

The government has been working in partnership with the insurance industry to ensure the necessary support is available to help homes and businesses. However, the recent flooding has seen reports of people not having sufficient insurance cover. The government will therefore investigate issues facing communities and small businesses.

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## **UK's iconic first red public telephone box listed**

- Telephone box has been outside the Royal Academy in London since 1924
- Box was built as part of a competition to create the iconic design

Heritage Minister Helen Whately has announced that the prototype for the UK's first red public telephone box has been upgraded to Grade II\* in recognition of its iconic design status.

Created in 1924 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (1880 – 1960), the prototype K2 (Kiosk No.2) telephone box formed the basis of the design of future telephone boxes across the country.

The timber K2 prototype was designed for a competition launched by the Royal Fine Arts Commission at the request of the Postmaster General to find an alternate to the unpopular concrete K1 structure which had been introduced in 1921.

Scott's timber prototype was initially displayed in 1924 outside the National



Gallery in Trafalgar Square with four other designs, and in 1925 it was announced that the K2 telephone box was the one 'most suitable for erection in busy thoroughfares of large towns'.

Scott's winning design was originally intended to be made of steel and painted silver with a blue-green interior, however, upon selection of the K2 design, the General Post Office chose to make it of cast-iron and painted red.

Heritage Minister Helen Whately said:

The red telephone box is an internationally famous British icon and I am delighted that we are able to protect the first of its kind.

In an increasingly digital world, it is important to preserve structures – like the K2 prototype phone box – that have played a part in our nation's industrial story.

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive, Historic England said:

We are pleased that the K2 telephone kiosk prototype at the entrance of Burlington House has been upgraded to Grade II\*. This unique timber structure by the celebrated British architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott represents a milestone in industrial design. Inspired by Sir John Soane's distinctive 1816 tomb to his wife and son in St Pancras Gardens, it was the winning entry for a major design competition in 1924 and formed the basis of the famous red phone boxes which are found across the country and known throughout the world. Still sitting where it was placed after judging, the K2 prototype remains a striking feature at Burlington House, and its protection is now further enhanced as an important part of our nation's industrial heritage.

After the successful competition, the first cast iron K2 was installed in London in 1926, with more than 1,700 appearing across the city over the course of the next decade. Only a small number were placed outside London and just over 200 K2s survive today. The K2 was replaced in 1935 by the streamlined, more compact and cost-effective K6 model which was also designed by Scott and is the most common red telephone box still in existence today.

The telephone box prototype in question still remains where it was placed in 1924, at the western side of the entrance portal to Burlington House, home of the Royal Academy. First listed at Grade II in 1986, its upgraded status better recognises its more than special architectural and historic interest.

Sir Giles Gilbert Scott was one of the most important modern British

architects and is famous for iconic British landmarks such as Battersea Power Station and Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral. In 2006 the K2 telephone box was voted one of Britain's top ten iconic designs.