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Changing the way HMRC handles incoming mail for enquiries into customer returns

What changes is HMRC making?

HMRC receives millions of items of post each year in relation to enquiries into customer returns. To manage this process more efficiently, we are going to start to scan incoming post.

Scanning enables us to create electronic images of the post received. The scanned material will be assigned to cases using electronic document management systems. Documents will be scanned in accordance with the British Standard Institute BSI DISC PD0008 (BSI BIP0008). This is the latest international standard relating to 'Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored Electronically'.

When will it happen?

Scanning will be introduced in phases. The first phase began in March 2011 and will continue in phases during 2011-12.

How will it work?

A single PO Box address will be used to identify the mail that is part of this process.

We will clearly state this address for you on outgoing correspondence.

In addition to the PO Box address, we will provide a reference on outgoing correspondence. This reference must be clearly stated on replies to us.

The reference will be prefixed by one of the following:

- CFS
- CFSS
- CFSC

If you want to send replies for more than one customer in the same envelope, we ask that you separate the documentation with individual covering letters ensuring the customer case reference is clearly stated on those letters.

You can still post your correspondence via recorded delivery.

When we receive your correspondence, we will scan and link it to the relevant case usually within 36 hours of receipt.

By setting destruction dates for images, it will make it easier for us to comply with our data protection obligations.

What happens to the original documents?

Some original documents will be returned to you as matter of course after they have been scanned. These include:

- P60's
- birth, death and marriage certificates
- passports

You must clearly state if you want any other supporting documents to be returned. If you don't ask for documents to be returned they will be securely destroyed – together with your covering letter, within 40 days of receipt.

What are the main benefits?

- scanning will ensure documents get to the relevant HMRC caseworker as quickly as possible
- by assigning paperwork to cases electronically, we avoid the need for letters and documents to be sent to caseworkers manually
- We will be able to handle your calls about the case, without delay caused by locating the original paper copies
- the new process helps us to handle your post more efficiently.

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