

IRS Privacy Policy

How the Independent Review Service (IRS) Collects Information in Connection with the Inspector's Review and How this Information is used

If JobCentre Plus has given you a decision and a review of your application for a Social Fund grant or loan you can then ask the IRS for an Inspector's review.

When you ask us for an Inspector's review we will contact JobCentre Plus and ask them to send your Social Fund papers to us. In most cases, once we have the papers we will write to you explaining the issues in your case. If we need to know more about you so we can make the right decision we will ask you some questions. We may also need to ask JobCentre Plus for more information about your case. Once we have the information we need we will make a decision.

We will not talk to other people about your case or your personal details, unless you have agreed to this. Exceptionally, we may need to do this without your agreement, for example, if it is necessary to prevent crime. But we will not talk to other people about your case unless the law allows us to do this.

The main reason we collect information is so that the Inspector can make the right decision on your case. But we may also need to use it for other purposes. The information may be used so that we can monitor the quality of Inspector's decisions, correct mistakes, and so that we can give our staff advice and training. It may be used to help us handle complaints, or if we need to take legal advice or defend legal proceedings. Your information may be used for research and statistical purposes. It may be used for giving feedback about the performance of JobCentre Plus and for associated training, and for giving feedback about problems with the Social Fund scheme. Sometimes we will look at your information if you ask for a review on another case, but we will let you know if we have used information from an earlier review.

When we have finished with your case papers we return these to JobCentre Plus. This will include any new information you have given us, unless there are exceptional reasons for us to withhold this information.

How we Protect Your Information

The IRS gives a very high priority to keeping your personal information safe and secure. Your papers are kept on our secure premises at all times, until they are returned to JobCentre plus using a secure courier service. We review and upgrade our computer systems to ensure they remain secure. We train our staff and have put processes and procedures in place to keep your information safe. We make sure our staff use your information for IRS business purposes only, and that it is only given to the right people. For some of our purposes we anonymise your data to provide extra security and confidentiality.

If we have to use contractors, for example, in the development of our computer systems, we ensure that they maintain our high security standards.

The Data Protection Act 1998 and Your Right to Access Your Information

The Data Protection Act sets rules for how organisations must treat your personal information. For the purposes of the Act the IRS is the Data Controller responsible for your personal information.

Under the Act you also have a right to ask us what information we hold about you and how we use it. You can also ask for a copy of the information we hold.

If you would like to ask us for information you will need to do the following:

1. Write to us at "Independent Review Service, FREEPOST".
2. Sign your letter and give us your name, address, date of birth, national insurance number and if possible your IRS reference number(s) – these will help us to confirm your identity and to find your information.
3. Say exactly what information you would like us to send you.

If we need more information we will contact you about this. We will respond to your request promptly, and within 40 days of us having all the information we need to deal with your request.

Normally you will be able to see all your information. Sometimes an exemption may mean we won't be able to send all of your information. For example, some health information cannot be disclosed if it would be likely to cause you serious harm. Some information cannot be disclosed if it would hamper a fraud investigation.

If you have made a similar request recently we may not need to provide you with information under the Act.

If you want to complain about the way we are handling your information please write to us about this. If, after our response, you are still not happy you can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF