

DRAFT Annex 5x: The unusability of HMRC's CH2 "on screen" forms

Child Benefit is not a low profile service¹ – parents of newborns are not a group who suffer from policy neglect,² nor are they 'time rich'.

The second most downloaded form³ on GOV.UK is the form for claiming Child Benefit⁴ with 1.068 million "unique downloads"⁵ in 2020 despite only 640,000 children being born a year.⁶ HMRC collect no data on which versions of the form are submitted to HMRC,⁷ although the excess is close to the 459,000 downloads of the "on screen" version.

In 2021, the web page⁸ for claiming Child Benefit has one option for parents of newborns to "print then fill in" and post back, with a second form to "fill in on screen". In the current digital world,⁹ if you click on the link to the "on screen" form, you are presented with a PDF which states:

Please wait...

If this message is not eventually replaced by the proper contents of the document, your PDF viewer may not be able to display this type of document.

You can upgrade to the latest version of Adobe Reader for Windows®, Mac, or Linux® by visiting http://www.adobe.com/go/reader_download.

For more assistance with Adobe Reader visit <http://www.adobe.com/go/acrreader>.

This reliance on a 'PDF-only' approach appears to be an entrenched legacy of consultants,¹⁰ whether System Integrators or Adobe sales teams, who cared more about their ongoing revenues than "user needs*".

The instructions further down the web page show the service *knows* the user experience is flawed:

"If you're using an older browser, for example, Internet Explorer 8, you'll need to update it or use a different browser. Find out more about [browsers](#).

You'll need to complete the form fully before you can print it. You cannot save a partly completed form so we suggest you gather all your information together before you begin to fill it in. The form includes help text to help filling it in."

That help text will tell you that even the "fill in on screen" form requires the completed form to be printed. **If parents of newborns don't have a printer how do they claim Child Benefit?**

¹ Such as the NCC1 form - see Annex s???

² We covered that aspect in Annex 5D and a form covering the Home Office: <https://medconfidential.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5D-Digital-failure-HO.pdf>

³ Consistently over time: https://whatdotheyknow.com/request/the_most_downloaded_pdfs_from_go

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-benefit-claim-form-ch2>

⁵ All usage figures are from GDS figures for gov.uk only – there may be other copies of forms available from others, or completed by accountants, etc.

⁶ Latest figures <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2019>

⁷ https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/cost_of_transactions_for_ch2_for

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-benefit-claim-form-ch2>

⁹ https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/platform_etc_figures_from_google#incoming-1778698

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/smithsam/status/1373952229552615427>