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Department of Finance and Personnel
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Sent by E-mail to ratingpolicy.cfg@dfpni.gov.uk

19th September 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

IRRV Response to **Data Sharing Consultation**

The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) is pleased to provide this response to the above consultation paper.

The IRRV is the professional body concerned with all aspects of local taxation in the United Kingdom. Its members are engaged in local tax administration (including domestic rates in Northern Ireland, non-domestic rates in the UK and council tax in Great Britain), local authority benefits administration, valuation of property for taxation, the appeals process and financial management in local government. The Institute represents the professional interests of its members who work within this broad church.

General Comments

The Institute supports the introduction of measures that will help to identify those entitled to benefit and other reliefs and increase take up of entitlements. Data sharing, if introduced with the requisite safeguards, should help to increase the uptake of rate reliefs and other benefits and assist in making certain aspects of the claims process easier.

In addition to greater data sharing, another aim should be to explore other ways in which to make the application process easier, such as eliminating duplication of effort for the claimant in providing document verification for different reliefs, allowances and benefits.

Section 1: Introduction

Do you agree that these new measures will make data held by Government more secure?

The inclusion of clear rules in primary legislation and the clear specification of what data can be shared should help to maintain data security. The physical

security and management of data transfers are equally important processes that require regular review for standards compliance. Data security should include adequate levels of encryption and access to data by authorized personnel only.

Is there anything else you would like to see done?

Comprehensive training will be required in the correction application of the data sharing measures.

Section 2: Data Sharing – Rate Reliefs - Take Up Issues

Are you happy for data to be shared in this way for the purpose of targeting those most likely to qualify for lone pensioner allowance?

Yes, subject to having appropriate safeguards in place so that only data required for the specific purpose is obtained. It is important to clearly explain to people why they have been targeted and how their data has been used.

Are you happy for data to be shared in this way for the purpose of targeting those most likely to qualify for disabled persons allowance?

Yes.

Are you happy for data to be shared in this way for the purpose of targeting those most likely to qualify for rate relief?

Yes.

Would you like to be able, if you so desired, to have access to the record of who accessed your data and for what purpose?

Yes, this appears to be an appropriate provision.

Is there any other information you would require before you would be happy for your data to be shared between Government departments?

No comment offered.

Do you have any concerns about the potential misuse of the data?

No, as long as appropriate training is in place and physical data security and data management processes are standards compliant.

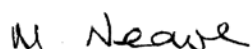
3: Data Sharing – Other Take Up Issues

Are you happy for this data to be shared for the purpose of Land and Property Services assessing housing benefit applications for owner-occupiers?

Yes, subject again to there being appropriate training in place and that physical data security and data management processes are standards compliant.

Please contact me should you wish to discuss any of these points further.

Yours truly,



Maureen Neave
Chairman, IRRV Benefits Faculty Board

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