

Introduction to National Insurance Number allocation

Introduction to NINo allocation

Background

1. A National Insurance Number (NINo) is unique to an individual and a personal account number used throughout someone's life to ensure National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and tax are accurately recorded.
2. It is also a reference number for Social Security benefits and Tax Credits.
3. A NINo consists of a two letter prefix followed by six numbers and a one letter suffix, for example, QQ123456A.
4. The National Insurance (NI) Scheme was introduced in 1948. NINos were created to support a clerical system.
5. The suffix of A, B, C, or D, was originally used to divide the NI cards into four equal quarters with cards ending A sent in to the government office in March, B in June, C in September and D in December.
6. In 1975 the system was computerised and was administered annually. Although the suffix became redundant, it remains in place.

The Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997

7. The Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997- Section 19 introduced benefit conditionality linked to a NINo. It is essential that a NINo is not:
 - assigned to, **or**
 - used by more than one person
8. The Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997- Section 19 amended the Social Security Administration Act 1992 and made entitlement to benefit conditional on the production of information or evidence to enable a NINo to be either:
 - traced
 - confirmed
 - allocatedfor the person or their partner.
9. This legislation gives authority to decision makers to disallow a claim to benefit where insufficient information or evidence is provided.
10. This means that a person is not entitled to benefit until the Department is satisfied the person in question:
 - is who they say they are, **and**
 - can either be linked to the appropriate NINo account, **or**
 - can provide sufficient information to allow a NINo to be allocated.

Registering for a National Insurance Number

11. The circumstances under which a person must apply for a NINo are set out in Regulation 9 of the Social Security (Crediting and Treatment of Contributions, and National Insurance Numbers) Regulations 2001.
12. A person **must** register for a NINo if they:
 - have never registered before, **and**
 - are aged 16 or over, **and**

- are **either**:
 - resident in the United Kingdom, **and**
 - are employed and/or self-employed, or
 - are likely to have some NI involvement in the near future for example, pay or be credited with NI contributions
 - are aged 18 or over and undertaking a course of training which has been approved by the Secretary of State for example, Work Based Learning for Adults, Work Based Learning in Wales, courses arranged by Local Enterprise Councils (LECs) in Scotland
 - have claimed or are a partner in a claim to:
 - Attendance Allowance
 - Bereavement Benefit
 - Carer’s Allowance
 - Child Benefit
 - Child Tax Credit
 - Disability Living Allowance (except special rules cases)
 - Disabled Persons Tax Credit
 - Incapacity Benefit
 - Income Support
 - Jobseekers Allowance
 - Retirement Pension
 - **Note**: This list is not exhaustive
 - **or** are not resident in the UK, **and**
 - are liable or entitled to pay Class 1 or Class 2 contributions, **or**
 - want to and would benefit from paying Class 3 voluntary contributions.

Reason for NINo application

13. Although all NINo applications, and subsequent decisions, will be based on the applicant’s entitlement and their business need for a NINo, the applicant might state that they need a NINo for a particular purpose. These reasons can include:
- employment
 - benefit claims
 - student loan applications
 - Personal Equity Plans
 - Individual Savings Accounts (ISA)
 - payment of tax on bank or building society interest
 - stakeholder pensions
 - being able to pay voluntary contributions
14. Note the reason on the application form.
15. The applicant’s interview must still take place. The appropriate evidence must be gathered and the application submitted to the NINo Centre (NC), except where there is doubt about the application. If there is a doubt about the application, a doubt notification will be sent and the National Identity Unit who will then decide to allocate or refuse a NINo.