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PRESS RELEASE

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BANKING INDUSTRY RESPONSE TO HMRC POTENTIAL DATA COMPROMISE

HMRC informed the banking industry on Friday 16th November that they had mislaid information containing the personal details of all child benefit recipients in the UK. As soon as the banking industry was made aware of this serious incident it initiated activity to help prevent customers' bank accounts being impacted.

We would like to reassure customers that there is no evidence that the data has fallen into criminal hands nor that any fraud has been attempted as a result of this incident. The HMRC has set up a Child Benefit Helpline on 0845 302 1444 for customers who want more detail.

Paul Smee, APACS Chief Executive comments, "Whilst this incident is extremely serious, at this stage customers should not be unduly concerned, as there's no evidence that the data has fallen into criminal hands. As part of its usual procedures the banking industry has done all it can to protect its customers accounts and will continue to do so. In the event that anyone is the innocent victim of fraud as a result of this incident customers can have peace of mind that they enjoy protection under the Banking Code which means that you should not suffer any financial loss as a result.

"There is no need for customers to ask for a new account or to contact their bank or building society. There is no evidence of an increase in suspicious activity on those customers' accounts since the data was mislaid on 18th October. We are confident that every action has been taken by HMRC and the banking industry to minimise the risk of any fraud."

The banking industry would like to reassure its customers that sort code and bank account, national insurance number, date of birth, name and address details are not enough in themselves for an ID fraudster to access your bank account – as additional security information and passwords are always required.

However, this information altogether is still potentially valuable to an ID fraudster and the sensible advice for any child benefit claimant is to just keep doing as they should always be doing which is to check their statement and keep a close eye on their account for any unusual activity.

The banking industry has produced a customer fact sheet which is available from www.apacs.org.uk.

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

APACS is the trade body that gives banks, building societies and card issuers a forum where they can work together on non-competitive issues. We help manage the way that businesses and individuals in the UK move their money around - this covers cash, credit and debit cards, cheques and automated payments such as direct debits, salary payments and online/phone transactions. We champion the fight against banking fraud and twice a year we publish figures on payment industry fraud losses.