

WELFARE REFORM ACT 2012

EXPLANATORY NOTES

COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Part 6: Miscellaneous

Section 135: Functions of registration service

686. *Section 135* inserts *section 19A*, “Functions relating to transmission of information to Secretary of State” into the Registration Service Act 1953.
687. This section creates a function allowing the Registrar General, superintendent registrars and registrars of births and deaths to transmit information entered in a register of births or contained in a birth declaration to the Secretary of State, and to verify such information for the Secretary of State, for certain purposes.
688. *Subsection (1)* confers a new function on registrars of births and deaths, superintendent registrars and the Registrar General, that will enable them to transmit and verify information for the purposes of the service set out in *subsection (2)*.
689. *Subsection (2)* specifies that the service referred to in subsection (1) is a service whereby individuals can pass birth information (which includes the fact that a birth declaration has been made or a birth has been registered and other information about that birth) to the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of State can pass that information on to other persons. The persons that the Secretary of State will pass the information to may include other government departments and Local Authorities. The service referred to in subsection (2) is also known as ‘Tell Us Once’.
690. *Subsection (3)* makes it clear that references to the Secretary of State include persons providing services to the Secretary of State for the purpose of the service referred to in subsection (2). It therefore includes any organisation providing that service on behalf of the Secretary of State.
691. *Subsection (4)* provides that nothing in the section authorises any disclosure which is otherwise unlawful.
692. The Tell Us Once programme provides a means by which the citizen can inform Government once about a birth or a death. It is a voluntary service, running alongside as an alternative to conventional notification channels. Tell Us Once shares the data, with the person’s consent, with other parts of the DWP and other organisations such as HMRC, Local Authorities’ Family Information Services and Library Services.
693. The policy intention behind this section is that the individual will inform Government (through the Tell Us Once service) once of a birth. Tell Us Once will, with a person’s consent, retrieve birth data from the General Register Office to share with other parts of DWP and other organisations. This will mean a person does not have to provide the same information to multiple organisations themselves. Drawing the data from the General Register Office enables those services to accept the birth registration and birth declaration information as verified for the purpose of assessing changes to entitlement to benefits and services and also removes the reliance on paper certificates.

*These notes refer to the Welfare Reform Act 2012
(c.5) which received Royal Assent on 8 March 2012*

694. The data that is transmitted would include the date of birth, full name and sex of the child and the registration district of the birth. It may include additional related data such as the full name of the mother of the child, and her usual address. Only data that is entered on the birth register or in a birth declaration will be transmitted.