



From CHIEF to CDS

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What is the Customs Declaration Service?

The Customs Declaration Service (CDS) is HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC) new electronic system for handling customs declaration processes, replacing the current Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system which was introduced in the early 1990s.

The CHIEF system will close in two phases, with new importers already required to register on CDS. Firstly, from 1st October 2022 all businesses will be required to use CDS for import declarations. Following this, after 31st March 2023, businesses will also be required to make export declarations via CDS.

As well as submitting import and export declarations, businesses will be able to use a number of CDS services, including:

- Using a cash account for CDS declarations
- Obtaining postponed import VAT statements
- Getting import VAT and duty adjustment statements
- Checking how to pay duties and VAT on imports
- Setting up a Direct Debit for a duty deferment account
- Uploading documents and receiving messages about customs declarations

Businesses will be able to add team members to their CDS subscription, which can only be accessed with each business' Government Gateway ID, as well as control which services each team member can access.

What are the key differences between CHIEF and CDS?

As part of the move from paper-based rules to data processing rules, a key change is the replacement of 'Boxes' in CHIEF with 'Data Elements' in CDS. While there were 68 Boxes for imports and 45 Boxes for exports in CHIEF, there will be significantly more Data Elements - depending on the type of declaration and situation - for CDS, with up to 76 for imports and 65 for exports.

A single box in CHIEF may contain several pieces of information which may now be separated into specific Data Elements in CDS. These are divided into eight groups:

1. Message information

Data Elements include information relating to the declaration, including Procedure Codes and Additional Procedure Codes

2. References

Data Elements must contain information about relevant customs authorisations, message and document references, and certifications

3. Parties

Data Elements include information on the different importers, buyers and other members in the supply chain of the goods

4. Valuation information and Taxes

Data Elements must provide information about how the goods are valued to ensure the correct customs value has been established and that the correct VAT and duties are calculated

5. Dates/Times/Periods/Places/Countries/Region

Data elements require relevant information about the supply chain of the goods, including their country of origin, where they were shipped from and to, and their final destination

6. Goods identification

Data Elements must include information pertaining to the quantity, weight and size of the goods to ensure the correct application of duty, and to enable customs officials to compare the identity of the goods with the declarations provided

7. Transport information

Data Elements include information on the modes, means and equipment used to transport the goods through specific points in the supply chain

8. Other

Data Elements require information relating to any tariff or statistical data and guarantees that cannot be input elsewhere on the declaration

Other differences include the replacement of the seven-digit Customs Procedures Codes for each goods item used on CHIEF by new procedure codes on CDS. These are divided into two for a single goods item: a four-digit Procedure Code and up to 99 Additional Procedure Codes, each three digits long.

How do I register for CDS?

Businesses must first have a Government Gateway user ID and will need to provide:

- Economic Operation Registration and Identification (EORI) number that starts with GB
- Unique Taxpayer Reference
- Business address already held on the Government's customs records
- National Insurance number for individual or sole traders
- Business start date

Why does this matter for my business?

From 31st March 2023, the CHIEF system will be permanently closed. This means that, from this date, all businesses will be required to submit every import and export declaration through CDS.

Businesses are being encouraged by HMRC to register on the new system as soon as possible, with registration sometimes taking weeks, to avoid delays and difficulty when importing goods in the coming months.

Further information is available for businesses on the Government's website, including a [CDS toolkit and checklist](#). Traders can also [register or check they have access to CDS](#) on the Government's website and access [live customer support services](#) for additional help.

How can the Chambers of Commerce help?

The Chambers of Commerce are working hard to inform and update local firms on the latest Brexit-related developments. Alongside briefing papers and social media videos, the three Chambers are also hosting a range of Brexit events over the next six months.

Access support and information about our Brexit activity and International services:

[Greater Birmingham](#)

[Black Country](#)

[Coventry and Warwickshire](#)



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