

Guidance for signatories on identity checking

The content below has been published to assist with the verification of the identity of those applying for AccessNI checks. This guidance is based upon established good practice and should not be read as being prescriptive. It remains the responsibility of the signatory to verify that the applicant for the AccessNI check is who they say they are, and that their details have been provided correctly on their application.

Introduction

Confirming the identity of the applicant who is undergoing the AccessNI check is a key part of the disclosure process. Whilst AccessNI may, in some cases, conduct its own checks to confirm identity, there is no substitute for thorough identify checks by employers. It is acceptable for a third party to undertake the ID check on behalf of the signatory; the signatory must however be assured that this has been done to a satisfactory level (this could include obtaining documentary evidence).

ID Checking Process

AccessNI has developed the PIN Notification and ID Validation Form to assist with this part of the process. In accordance with AccessNI Circular 1/2012, the applicant for the AccessNI check is required to provide a range of ID documents (from the listed Group 1 and Group 2 document set) as part of the wider AccessNI application process. Signatories / employers must:

- establish the true identity of the applicant through the examination of a range of documents as set out in this guidance.
- make sure the applicant provides details of all names by which they have been known.
- make sure the applicant provides details of all addresses where they have lived in the last five years.
- check that the application is fully completed and the information it contains is accurate. Failing to do this can result in delays or inaccurate disclosures.

If there are any discrepancies in the information provided by the applicant and/or the identity documents supplied, and fraud is not suspected, please ask the applicant to clarify. If you don't do this it may compromise the integrity of the AccessNI service and introduce risk to your recruitment or licensing arrangements.

As an employer you must not attempt to amend the application without the applicant's knowledge and agreement. Doing this will invalidate the declaration by the applicant and may breach data protection legislation.

ID Guidance for AccessNI checks

- Only accept valid and current documentation.
- Wherever possible, insist on original documentation (photocopies can increase element of risk).

- Do not accept documentation printed from the internet e.g. internet bank statements.
- Validate identity information for the applicant's current name, date of birth and address as recorded on the AccessNI application.
- In the first instance, seek documents with photographic identity (e.g. passport, driving licence, etc.) and compare this against the applicant's likeness.
- Ensure that the applicant declares all previous name changes, and provides documentary proof to support the change of name. If the applicant is unable to provide proof to support the change of name, you should hold a probing discussion with the applicant about the reasons why before considering to validate their identity.
- Ensure the applicant provides a full and continuous address history covering the last five years (the on-line system will validate to ensure this is the case). Where possible you should seek documentation to confirm this address history.
- Cross-match the applicant's address history with any other information you have been provided with as part of the recruitment process, such as their Curriculum Vitae (CV). This can highlight if an address has not been given e.g. if the applicant's CV shows that they have worked in Glasgow in the last five years, but the application form only shows Belfast addresses; you may wish to question the applicant further about this.
- A document from each of the groups should be included only once in the document count, e.g. do not accept two bank statements as two of the required documents, if they are from the same bank.
- You should not accept the foreign equivalent of an identity document if that document is listed as '(UK)' or '(NI)' only on the list of valid identity documents.

Applicants who have been adopted

If they were adopted before the age of 10, they do not need to provide their surname at birth on the AccessNI application, they should give their adoptive name in this section.

This is because the age of criminal responsibility is deemed to be 10 years, under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, Chapter 12, Section 50. This means that there is no possibility that an individual could have a criminal record in a name that was used until the age of 10.

Checking driving licences

Do not accept licences, other than those stated in the Group 1 document list.

English, Welsh and Scottish driving licence numbers contain information about the applicant's name, sex and date of birth. This information is written in a special format but can be gleaned and matched against the information provided by the applicant in their application.

Please note that the date of birth on English, Welsh and Scottish driving licences, issued before 1977, is not recorded as a separate entry on the licence. The date of

birth can be deciphered from the driving licence number and checked against the date of birth field on the application form.

For example, the format of the number for Christine Josephine Robinson, born 2 July 1975

R O B I N 7 5 7 0 2 5 C J 9 9 9 0 1

N N N N N Y M M D D Y I I C C C C C

N = 1st five letters of the surname (if the surname begins MAC or MC it is treated as MC for all).

Y = first number of YEAR of birth.

M = MONTH of birth (In the case of a female, the number represented by the first M will have the value 5 added to the first digit e.g. a female born in November (i.e. 11) would display '61' in the MM boxes or if born in February (i.e. 02) would display '52').

D = DAY of month of birth.

Y = second number of YEAR of birth.

I = Initial letter of the first two forenames - if only one, then 9 will replace the second letter. If the licence indicates that the applicant has a middle name, ensure that one has been provided in Section A.

C = Computer generated.

For Northern Ireland, Isle of Man and Jersey driving licences, the licence number is in a different format. The licence number is unique to the driver and the 'name' or 'date of birth' validation, as shown above, cannot be used.

How do I check for indicators of fraud?

Always check for signs of tampering when checking identity documents. Documents should be queried if they display any signs of damage, especially in the areas of personal details such as the name and the photograph. The following guidelines should help you look out for any suspicious signs when authenticating documents.

Checking a passport

Check the general quality and condition of the passport. Treat it with suspicion if it is excessively damaged; accidental damage is often used to conceal tampering.

Photographs should be examined closely for signs of damage to the laminate or for excessive glue or slitting of the laminate; these signs would indicate photo substitution. If the photograph appears excessively large, this might indicate an attempt to hide another photograph underneath. There should also be an embossed strip embedded into the laminate, which will catch a portion of the photograph.

Check there is no damage to this area. If the passport is from a foreign national, you can still follow the same procedures as above.

Her Majesty's Passport Office has produced a guide to be used when [checking passports for identification](#).

Checking a photo driving licence

Examine the licence for evidence of photo tampering or any amendment of the printed details.

Checking an old style driving licence (no photograph)

Remove the document from the plastic wallet and check that it is printed on both sides.

It should have a watermark visible by holding the licence up to the light and there should be no punctuation marks in the name or address.

The 'Valid To' date should be the day before the bearer's 70th birthday (unless the bearer is already over 70). The 'Valid To' date can therefore be cross-referenced with the applicant's date of birth detailed in Section A.

Checking a birth certificate

Birth certificates are not evidence of identity, and are easily obtained. Although certificates issued at the time of birth may give more confidence that it belongs to the individual, unlike a recently issued certificate, they will not show if any information has been corrected or superseded by a new registration.

Check the quality of paper used; genuine certificates use a high grade. There should be a watermark visible when the document is held up to the light. The background of each certificate is patterned with a complex design of lines and words. A feature is included to assist in identifying if a photocopy has been presented. Any signs of smoothness on the surface would indicate that original text might have been washed or rubbed away. There should be no signs of tampering, changes using liquid paper, overwriting or spelling mistakes.

The following list provides some general information about certificate completion which may help to establish whether the certificate and/or the details have been falsified. This is provided solely as a guide, and is not exhaustive:

- The certificate format used should be appropriate for the year of registration.
- No abbreviation should be shown on the entry
- There should be no blank spaces in the certificate. Where there is no information to be recorded a line should be drawn / typed in the space.
- In NI, all birth certificates now include a small hologram.

The following information might indicate that the certificate has been altered:

- Spacing between falsely added particulars might be irregular compared to original information. 'Thick' or 'thin' spacing might infer particulars have been added.
- False particulars might not have been aligned with other words.
- Characters may not be of the same size or shape with the rest of the particulars.
- Movement of handwriting may look mechanical and does not flow with the rest of the particulars.
- Changes might not be consistent e.g. parents' surnames might be altered, but not the signatures.
- The area around falsely added or removed particulars may react differently under an ultra violet light i.e. show signs of staining. In addition, such areas of paper may appear thinner where the paper fibres have been disturbed by abrasion.

Checking an EU photo identity card

Examine the card for evidence of photo tampering or any amendment of the printed details.

Checking an HM Forces ID card

Examine the card for evidence of photo tampering or any amendment of the printed details.

Checking a firearms licence

In NI, the Firearms Certificate is printed on security paper which is predominantly a pale green background with a pale pink stripe down the middle. When photocopied, the word FRAUD will show up.

Each certificate will carry a photograph of the holder along with a unique PID and certificate number (both 6 digits). All certificates will be signed by the Chief Constable and will be for 5-year duration.

In England and Wales, the licence is printed on blue security paper with a Royal crest watermark and a faint pattern stating the words 'Home Office'.

In all instances, the licence should be signed by the holder and bear the authorising signature of the chief of police for the area in which they live, or normally a person to whom his authority has been delegated.

Examine the licence for evidence of photo tampering or any amendment of the printed details, which should include home address and date of birth (to be cross referenced with other ID documentation presented).

Checking a biometric residence permit

View the features of a permit and how to check them on the UK Visas and Immigration website.

Other types of ID

Ensure all letters and statements are recent, i.e. within a three month period. Do not accept documentation printed from the internet.

Check letter headed paper is used, bank headers are correct and all documentation looks genuine. The address should be cross-referenced with that quoted on the AccessNI application.

What should you do if you suspect false identity or documents?

If you suspect that you have been presented with a false identity or documents at the time of application, do not proceed with the application process.

- report suspected identity fraud through the [Action Fraud](#) website
- further information on identity fraud can be found on the [Metropolitan police](#) website
- if you suspect identity fraud once an AccessNI application has been submitted, you must call us on 0300 200 7888

You are also advised that under Section 8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 all employers in the United Kingdom are required to make basic document checks to help prevent anyone from working illegally.

By carrying out checks employers will be able to establish a defence for themselves if any of their employees are found to be working illegally at a later date.

Further details are available on the [UK visas and immigration](#) website or by calling the employer helpline on 0845 010 6677.

Where to go for help

You can go to the [public register of authentic identity and travel documents online](#) on the PRADO website to identify the basic safeguards contained in European documents and a few more other nationality documents.

The PRADO website is provided by the Council of European Union.