# Appendix 2: Checking documents for authenticity

**Guidance**

When considering authenticity of identity documents, employers may find it useful to refer to government guidance on <u>verifying different forms of identification</u> to detect basic forgeries.

Checking document authenticity is an integral and important part of the verification of identity process. No single form of identification can be fully guaranteed as genuine and therefore the verification process must be cumulative.

Employers must make it clear, in writing, to all applicants that any relevant documents will be checked for authenticity either manually, through an appropriate body, and/or using an electronic scanning device.

**Passports (UK and overseas)**

● Check the general quality and condition of the passport. Look out for page substitution, incorrect numbering of pages, damage to the cover or spine of the document, and poor paper or print quality.

● Check that print is clear and even. Print processes are deliberately complex on genuine documents.

● Check wording, issue and expiry dates. Spelling mistakes are common in forged or counterfeit documents, especially on stamps and visas. Forgers often only alter the expiry date, so ensure this corresponds with the issue date.

● Check for damage. Accidental damage is often used to conceal tampering, so treat any excessive damage with caution.

● Check photographs for signs of damage or for excessive glue. This could indicate photo substitution. An excessively large photograph may be hiding another photograph underneath. There should be an embossed strip embedded into the laminate, which will catch a portion of the photograph.

● Check watermarks can be clearly seen when holding the document up to the light.

- Check the name of the country of origin. Unofficial travel documents in the name of non-existent countries, or countries no longer known by their original name, are in circulation.

**Biometric residence permits**

Employers will find it useful to refer to general Home Office guidance available on the gov.uk website. They can also check an individual's biometric residence permit using the Home Office online checking portal.

**Photocard driving licences**

Photocard driving licences contain similar security features to those present in passports.

- Examine the licence carefully, looking for any damage or adjustments.

- Ensure the printed details have not been changed.

- Check watermarks and security features are intact.

- Photographs will always be in greyscale, check this matches the individual.

- Check the biographical details (for example, name, and date of birth) match the details of the individual.

- Ensure the 'valid to' date is the day before the owner's 70th birthday (if the owner is over 70 this does not apply). Cross reference the valid to date with the individual's date of birth, which appears in Section A of the counterpart document.

- Where employers have a legitimate right to obtain information about entitlements and/or penalty points (endorsements) because of the nature of the job they are recruiting to, and they have sought the licence holder's permission to access information using the DVLA's online share driving licence service which is available on the gov.uk website (not available for licence holders in Northern Ireland), employers should cross-reference any information provided online with the information provided in the photocard licence.

**Old-style paper driving licences**

- Remove the document from the plastic wallet and check 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.

- Ensure the 'valid to' date is the day before the bearer's 70th birthday (unless the bearer is already over 70). The valid to date can be cross-referenced with the individual's date of birth, which appears on other verification ID.

## UK firearms licences

- Check the licence is printed on blue security paper with a Royal crest watermark and a faint pattern stating the words 'Home Office'.

- Examine the licence for evidence of photo tampering or any amendment of the printed details, which should include home address and date of birth. 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.

## HM Armed Forces identity cards

- Check the card for any tampering or alteration of the printed details.

- HM Armed Forces identity cards must be surrendered upon leaving the Armed Forces, therefore only those individuals who are currently serving in the Armed Forces will hold a card.

## UK Citizen photocard

Check the card has the PASS (Proof of Age Standards Scheme) hologram. This signifies the card is genuine and is recognised as valid ID under the law.

- The colour photo confirms the person presenting the card is the lawful holder.

- Every photocard card displays ultra-violet markings in the form of two '100 per cent proof' logos.

## Birth certificates

Birth certificates are not wholly reliable for the purpose of verifying an individual's identity, as copies may be easily obtained. Certificates that are issued shortly after the time of birth are more reliable than recently issued duplicates, as these will not show if any information has been corrected or superseded by a new registration.

Duplicate copies issued by the General Register Office will state 'certified copy' on the birth certificate.

● Check the quality of the paper used. Genuine certificates use a high grade.

● If the document is held up to the light there should be a visible watermark.

● Check the certificate format used is in the format for the year of registration.

● Check the surname only is entered in upper case and not the forename(s).

● Any signs of smoothness on the surface may indicate that original text has been washed or rubbed away.

● There should be no signs of tampering, changes using liquid paper, overwriting, or spelling mistakes.

● Ensure the date of birth and registration/issue dates are provided. The date of birth should be shown with the day and month in words and the year in figures.

● Check the name and date of birth given in the application for match those given in the birth certificate.

Further guidance on checking birth certificates is available on the HM Passport Office section of the gov.uk website.

**Other supporting documents**

Documents such as utility bills and bank statements support an individual's identity and proof of address but they are not identity documents in themselves. Modern IT and the internet mean that these

documents can be easily obtained or forged, and they do not have many security features that can be easily checked.

The following checks will help to identify any inconsistencies or anomalies:

● Check the document is on original, quality, headed paper. Pay particular attention to the company logo, as logos lose their quality when photocopied or scanned.

● Check for even folds on original documents, most bills are machine folded before being sent to customers.

**Summary of updates**

**April 2023**

● Added in references to new government guidance on examining identity documents.

● Moved paragraph on information about young people from Appendix 1 to **Section 5: Obtaining proof of identity from those furthest from the jobs market.**

● Standard reformatted to make it easier to refer to. Wording changed to make requirements clearer. Links updated throughout.

**May 2022**

● Clarified requirements for refugees and other forcibly displaced people who are overseas **(para 5.3.3)**.

**March 2022**

● Standard reformatted to make it easier to refer to. Wording changed to make requirements clearer. Links updated throughout.

● Reference made to cabinet office guidelines on checking identity. The principles of this document align with identity check requirements **(para 1.2.2)**.

- We have removed the section 'Using advances in technology'. Relevant information has been incorporated into the minimum requirements section **(2)**.

- The process to check identity remotely, as outlined in <u>temporary pre-employment check guidance</u> has been made a permanent change and incorporated into the standard **(section 2.1)**.

**July 2021**

- Pages 10 - 11: updated lists of acceptable documents to reflect requirements across the system. Removed EU specific guidance in line with right to work guidance from 1 July 2021.