A guide to identity checking for AccessNI applications

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1 Introduction

1.1 If you are reading this document it is likely because you or an organisation you are involved with has identified a potential need to undertake criminal history disclosure checks as part of a recruitment process.

1.2 A series of hyperlinks (pre-fixed with a) have been inserted throughout this document which, if selected, will take the (on-line) reader to web pages with further information on the specific subject matter.

1.3 This document provides guidance for those reviewing identification documents provided by applicants for AccessNI checks. Identity checking is a key part of the application process and without thorough checking AccessNI may not be able to match an applicant to their criminal record. This means an employer or voluntary provider may not receive important information about the applicant and potentially introduces risk to the recruitment processes for the organisation that could undermine safeguarding arrangements.

1.4 Applicants are required to provide a range of ID documents as part of the AccessNI application process. Signatories must:-

- Check the correct identity documents as set out in the List of Acceptable Documents or ensure that these have been checked by a trusted person;
- Check that the information on the application matches the information found on the identity documentation; and
- Make sure that the applicant has included all names by which they are or have been known. The most common example of this is a maiden name, but you should also check for other types of name changes. All forenames must be included in an application.

1.5 A Signatory can then accurately complete the declaration in the application form that he/she has established the true identity of the applicant through examination of a range of their personal documents.

1.6 To assist AccessNI in searching for an applicant's criminal record a Signatory has the option in the on-line process to:-

- Amend incorrectly typed names (eg change "Balck" to "Black")
- Add forenames evident on the ID documentation not on the application form, eg , James to James, Robert;
- Change lower case letters to capital letters.

1.7 Where there is a discrepancy between the identity document information provided by an applicant and the information provided on the application form, ask the

applicant to clarify the reason for this or for additional information and/or documentation.

2 What must I do when reviewing identification documents?

2.1 You must:-

- Only accept valid, current and original documentation.
- Not accept photocopies unless you are totally confident they are genuine facsimiles of original documents (for example the original has been checked by someone you trust and they have advised which documents they have checked and they have provided photocopies to you as the Signatory).
- Not accept documentation printed from the internet – e.g., an applicant's bank statement. On-line documentation from the bank should be stamped and authenticated by a bank official.
- Where possible obtain documents that have the applicant's photograph and compare this against the applicant's appearance in person;
- Cross match the addresses provided by the applicant with the documentation and any other information you might have. For example, the applicant's CV may suggest they have recently lived in another part of the UK, or the Republic of Ireland, but they have not provided addresses about this on the application form.
- Ensure that at least one document provides the applicant's current address as on the application.
- Ensure that at least one document has the applicant's date of birth (a passport, driving licence or birth certificate).
- Ensure there is documentary proof of an applicant's change of name - if an applicant is unable to provide proof to support a change of name, you should hold a probing discussion with the applicant about the reason(s) why, before validating their identity.
- A document from the groups should be included only once in the document count. As one example, don't accept two bank statements as two of the required documents, if they are from the same bank.
- When checking the validity of the documents it is best practice to carry out this examination face to face. You must be in physical possession of the original documents when checking documents face to face. Other alternative methods include via a live video link, for example Skype and FaceTime. In this situation

the Signatory must be in receipt of copy identity documents before they verify the documentation during the video link and the scanned or copy identity documentation must be of good quality. Any risks identified when using live video must be assessed and mitigated by you if implementing this practice. You must not rely on the inspection of the documents via a live video link or by checking a faxed or scanned copy of the document. The applicant's original documentation should be verified by the Signatory or a Manager on their first day of recruitment, or as soon as possible thereafter, to ensure it matches the information on the scanned or emailed documentation used to process the disclosure applications. 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.

3 How important is name checking?

3.1 It is essential that all names of the applicant are included in an AccessNI application form together with names they may previously have used but no longer do so. Criminal records are not updated when a person changes their name for whatever reason and therefore it is vital to capture this information.

3.2 All forenames must be captured, even if the person only uses one. So if an applicant simply uses the name Bill, Liam or William, but his full set of forenames are William David John, all of these must be included in the application form. Similarly, if a person shortens their forename, for example James to Jim, the name James must be included in the relevant section of the form. Jim can be inserted into the 'known by' name box. This increases the potential for AccessNI to match the applicant against a criminal record.

3.3 The most common reason for a change of surname is marriage where a new wife may take her husband's surname or both parties take each other's name into a new surname (e.g, Smith-Simpson). All surnames used during a person's lifetime must be captured on the application except in those circumstances where someone (for example, through adoption) takes a new surname before 10 years of age. This includes those who may now use an Irish variation of their surname at the time of application, having used a different name at birth, or have changed their name due to conversion to a particular faith, or by deed poll.

3.4 If you consider an applicant has not divulged a previous name you should require them to produce or obtain a long form of their birth certificate. This may cause some delay as they make an application to the General Register Office (NI) for this document.

3.5 There are special arrangements for transgender applicants. Please refer to the link below before asking an applicant to complete an application form:-

About Criminal Record Checks

3.6 Where the applicant is from **Spain** or **Portugal** and a barred list check is required in relation to working or volunteering with children, counter-signatories must note that Spanish/Portuguese names often have two personal and two family names. These can be written separately or in the case of Spain joined with a Y, or in Portugal with an E. To avoid delays in processing applications, these names must be included on the application form, for example:-

Spain	Jesus Maria GONZALEZ LOPEZ
	Jesus Maria GONZALEZ Y LOPEZ
Portugal	Joana Filipa SANTOS CUHNA
	Joana Filipa SANTOS E CUHNA

3.7 Where an applicant is from **Bulgaria**, **Greece** or **France** and a barred list check is required in relation to working or volunteering with children, counter-signatories must note that both parents' names should be provided to AccessNI. Applicants from **France** should also provide a district code if the town of birth is Paris, Lyon or Marseille. This information should be provided to the following mailbox – ani@accessni.gov.uk.

4 How important is address checking?

4.1 Address checking is another vital part of the identification procedure. All addresses the applicant has lived during the past five years must be included. This can assist AccessNI in checking whether a criminal record may belong to the applicant. Signatories should therefore check that the address supplied through the identification documents matches that on the application. Where there is a discrepancy, the applicant should be asked to provide an explanation – for example, that they have just moved home and have documents relating to that address.

4.2 It is also important that AccessNI has the correct address for the issue of the certificate by post otherwise the applicant may find that his or her certificate has been opened by another person.

4.3 Where the applicant is a **French national** and is seeking to work or volunteer with children in Northern Ireland, and requires a check of the barred lists, some additional address information may be required. If the applicant's place of birth is Paris, Lyon or Marseilles then the appropriate district or *arrondissement* code should also be included in the *town of birth* box in the application or delays may occur in processing the application.

5 What documents must the applicant provide?

5.1 A list of the documents that an applicant is required to produce can be found on the nidirect website at:-

List of Acceptable Documents

5.2 You should not accept the foreign equivalent of an identity document if that document is listed as '(UK)' on the list of valid documents.

6 What if the applicant does not have the relevant documents?

6.1 You must contact AccessNI on 0300 200 7888. We may ask you to conduct an external ID validation check (**Annex B**), or require the applicant to attend a PSNI station to have their fingerprints checked. An application should not be submitted to AccessNI until this process is completed.

7 Applicants who have been adopted.

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

7.2 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.

8 Applicant is a young person and does not have the required documents?

8.1 You should contact AccessNI for further advice. It is extremely unlikely that AccessNI would ask anyone under 18 to attend a police station for fingerprinting. Here, the emphasis will be on reviewing the documents the young person has available and, if necessary, asking them to obtain additional documentation. Remember, it is in your interest that identity is properly verified.

9 Applicant is from Ireland, what documents should I be looking for?

9.1 If your applicant is from Ireland, you can examine a range of documents issued by the Irish government as set out in Groups 1 and 2a and 2b of the list of acceptable documents.

10 Applicant is not a national from the UK or Ireland, what documents should I be looking for?

10.1 If your applicant is not from the UK or Ireland and wants to do paid work you should, as with a UK applicant, look for and review documents set out in the list of acceptable documents from Groups 1 and 2. From Group 1 this can include a passport or driving licence and from Group 2b various living and social documents such as mortgage, bank or credit card statements. These documents may well relate to the applicants address in their own country although, if they are currently or have been within the UK over the past 5 years, they should be asked to provide documentation in relation to this.

10.2 If your applicant comes from outside the UK or Ireland, there are a limited number of documents that are acceptable in terms of identity checking, as follows:-

Group 1	- a current and valid passport;
Group 2a	- a current driving licence photocard or - an immigration document, visa or work permit
Group 2b	- bank or building society statement; or - a letter of sponsorship from a future employment or voluntary organisation.

10.3 If the applicant does not have these documents, and the post is for employment purposes, a Signatory can substitute a document that shows that the applicant has a right to work in the UK for documentation in the list of acceptable documents. **Annex D** shows the primary identity documents for non-UK nationals needing an AccessNI check for paid work in the UK.

10.4 Clearly it is not always practical to ask overseas nationals who will require an AccessNI check on coming to Northern Ireland to provide original documentation, where the applicant will be in a volunteering role. In such circumstances, good quality photocopies, e-mails or smart phone pictures are acceptable. However, once the applicant arrives in Northern Ireland they should be asked to produce the originals of the documents used to verify identity. These should be checked against the copies held by the registered organisation.

10.5 Where the applicant is coming to take up employment, original documentation must be checked.

11 Right to Work declaration

11.1 Signatories should note that the declaration on the AccessNI application now requires them to confirm (where the applicant is taking up a paid position) that the employing organisation has carried out a check to ensure the applicant has a right to work in the UK. More detailed information on how to check an individual's right to work can be found at the link provided below:

https://www.gov.uk/check-job-applicant-right-to-work

11.2 In these circumstances, an AccessNI application should not be submitted if the applicant has no 'right to work' in the UK.

12 Can I get someone else to do the identity checking for me?

12.1 Many registered organisations have processes where the countersigning of an application takes place in a central location, but identity checking is carried out by a different person usually at a locality close to where the applicant lives. Umbrella Bodies normally work on the basis that it is a member of their client organisation that undertakes the identity check. This is perfectly acceptable, but Signatories should satisfy themselves that the identity checker has undertaken all the procedures set out in this document. It is the responsibility of Registered and Umbrella Bodies to provide appropriate training in relation to identity checking to those undertaking this work on their behalf.

12.2 AccessNI has designed a PIN Notification/ID Validation Form to assist with this part of the process:-

PIN Notification and ID Validation Form

12.3 This enables the Registered/Umbrella Body to give the applicant the appropriate PIN number to make a successful on-line application. Once this is done, the applicant can then enter the reference number of their AccessNI application on the form. At this stage the identity checking can be carried forward. The identity checker must state on the PIN Notification/ID Validation Form that they have checked relevant documents and mark which documents they have seen. Once this is completed it can then be sent to the person in the Registered or Umbrella body that is processing the application, along with a copy of the ID documents.

12.4 This PIN Notification/ID Validation Form is available from the nidirect website as a MS Word document and many organisations have adapted this for their own specific needs.

13 Checking UK driving licences

13.1 **Annex A** provides some helpful information in terms of checking UK driving licences.

14 External validation checking

14.1 **Annex B** provides further information about using an external validation service. This should always be used where an applicant cannot provide sufficient documentation to meet the requirements set out in this guidance document.

15 Checking for use of fraudulent documents

15.1 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 information and the link to an important Home Office document set out in **Annex C** should help you look out for any suspicious signs when authenticating documents.

16 Keeping records of identification documents checked

16.1 AccessNI ensures that Registered Bodies, including Umbrella Bodies and Responsible Bodies, are complying with the AccessNI Code of Practice. Following a review of the compliance strategy, AccessNI now requires all organisations to keep copies of the identification documents checked for a period of 90 days after the disclosure certificate is issued. On compliance visits AccessNI will now undertake a random sample of checks to compare the information on application forms submitted against the identification documents held. Documents may be destroyed 90 days after the certificate is issued.

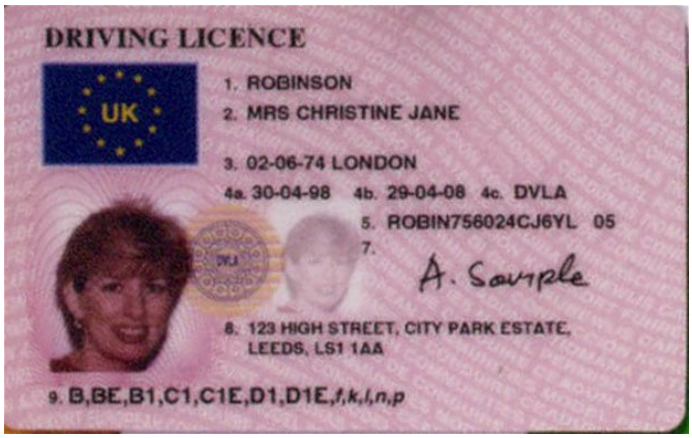
ANNEX A - Driving licences

Do not accept licences other than those listed in the list of Acceptable documents.

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. For example, the format of the number for Christine Jane Robinson, born 2 June 1974 (see image):-

R O B I N 7 0 6 0 2 4 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 C C

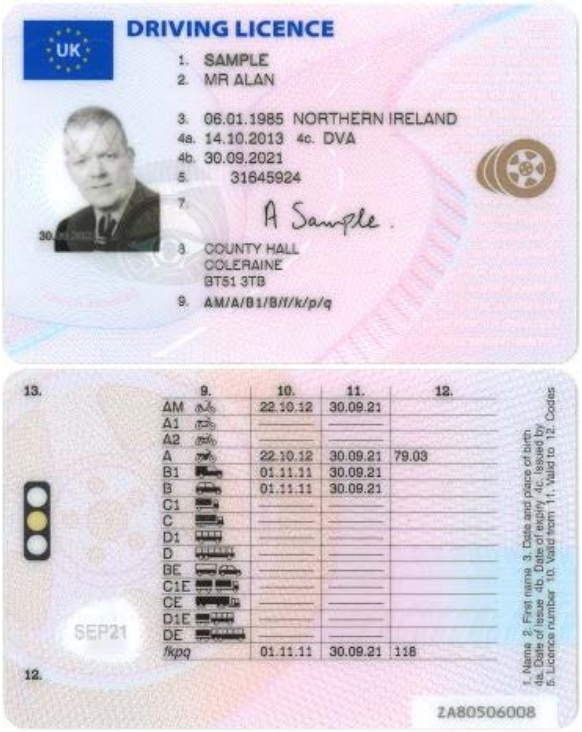
N	=	1st five letters of the surname (if the surname begins MAC or MC it is treated as MC for all).
Y	=	YEAR of birth – the decade digit is the first Y and the specific year the second Y
M	=	MONTH of birth. In the case of a female, the number is incremented by 5. That means instead of 01-12, her month of birth will be 51-62
D	=	DAY of month of birth
I	=	Initial letter of the first two forenames - if the driver has only one forename, the number 9 will replace the second letter. If the licence indicates that the applicant has a middle name, ensure that one has been provided on the application.
C	=	Computer generated



More recent licences in GB look like this:-

NI Driving licences

Northern Ireland driving licences have a different format in that the unique number does not contain details of the individual. Northern Ireland licences look like this:-



Checking an old style driving licence (no photograph)

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.

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.

ANNEX B - External Validation Service

1 Introduction

An external ID validation check is an alternative way of verifying the identity of an applicant.

It will involve you providing an applicant's details (as presented on the application form) to your chosen supplier, who will compare the data you have obtained from the applicant against a range of independent, external data sources.

For the purposes of obtaining an AccessNI check we request that employers ask for a check that is aligned to the following standard:

Medium confidence - as detailed in the Good Practice Guide (GPG) 45

HMG's Minimum Requirements for the Verification of the Identity of Individuals - January 2003

This document was produced by the Cabinet Office and provides guidelines for verifying the identity of individuals, prior to granting access to government services. A 'Medium confidence' check (previously known as 'identity level 2') provides substantial assurance that the registrant's real world identity is verified.

It is important to note that standards set out in the above are widely acknowledged within the ID checking industry.

AccessNI Signatories will not be required to have any in-depth knowledge of what a 'Medium confidence' check involves. Those organisations providing the check will be in a position to give an assurance that they comply with the standards described within the guidance.

2 How do I decide whether an applicant has passed or failed an external ID validation check?

You should specify when sourcing a potential ID validation supplier that a 'PASS/FAIL' decision is required as part of the check that you request. Dependent on the result, you will then either authenticate the applicant or consider contacting AccessNI to discuss the situation further.

3 Easy five-step guide to accessing an external ID validation check

The following is a guide to using a commercial identity checking provider. It is not exhaustive.

Step 1

Research suppliers that provide an ID validation service (i.e. through use of an internet search engine – entering wording like 'ID verification' should return a number of supplier's websites). You should read the general information provided by these suppliers regarding the type of services they provide before deciding whether to contact them.

Step 2

Once you have identified a suitable supplier, you should make contact using the telephone number or email address provided on their website. Use the following requirements in your discussions to decide whether the supplier can provide an ID check that is suitable for AccessNI purposes. We require an ID validation check which:-

- Complies with the standards set out in Level 2 (remote) of 'HMG's Minimum Requirements for the Verification of the Identity of Individuals - January 2003'.
- Provides a straightforward PASS/FAIL result (some suppliers may return a score or a percentage, neither of which are acceptable).
- Provides a hard copy or printable result page.

Step 3

If the ID validation supplier can meet the above requirements, you should then gather further information by asking questions such as:-

- Can you perform this type of check now, or is the service still in development?
- How much will it cost?
- How do I register with you?
- What are the payment methods and processes?
- What are your terms and conditions?

Step 4

You may wish to contact a number of ID validation suppliers to establish which is best suited to your requirements.

Step 5

Start conducting external ID validation checks on applicants to establish their identity.

The process of accessing an external ID check supplier should only need to be carried out once. When you have identified a suitable supplier there should be no need to source an alternative, unless you decide the service is unsatisfactory.

ANNEX C - Guidelines for checking for fraudulent documentation

In 2016, the Home Office produced guidance on examining identity documents. This can be found at the following link:-

Guidance on examining Identity Documents - June 2016

The guidance provides useful information on every aspect of identity documentation including undertaking "right to work" papers. It sets out the security features built into documents and how these can be detected and what to look out for in counterfeit documents, particularly EU documents. Particular care should be used when checking such documentation. There is also information on how to detect forged documents, including the use of substitute photographs and documents that can be provided by applicants but have no official standing.

There is also a useful checklist that you can use in the consideration of documents and who and where to report if you believe you have been given a false document.

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/EU photo identity card/HM Forces ID card

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

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. 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 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.
- Only the surname should be entered in upper case, not the forename(s).
- Dates of birth should be shown with the day and month in words and the year in digits.

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.

If unsure about the authenticity of a Northern Ireland birth certificate you can contact the General Register Office for Northern Ireland at 0300 200 7890.

In relation to birth certificates issued in GB or the Republic of Ireland the following contact numbers may be helpful:-

England and Wales	0300 123 1837
Scotland	0131 314 4411
Republic of Ireland	00353 90 663 2900

Checking a firearms licence (Northern Ireland)

Check the certificate is printed on green and pink security paper with a very faint pattern stating the words 'Police Service of Northern Ireland'.

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

The certificate should be signed by the holder and bear the authorising signature of the Chief Constable.

Checking a firearms licence (England and Wales)

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 an EEA 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 biometric residence permit

View the features of a permit and how to check a job applicant's biometric residence permit to see if they have a right to work in the UK.

Checking 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, the font of the type print is consistent across the document, bank headers are correct and all documentation looks genuine. The address on the letter/statement should be cross-referenced with that used in the 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 check 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 to check non-UK issued identity and travel documents?

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.

ANNEX D - Primary identity documents for non-UK and Irish nationals needing an AccessNI check for paid work in the UK

Document	Notes
A document issued by the Home Office to a family member of an EEA or Swiss citizen, and which indicates that the holder is permitted to stay in the United Kingdom indefinitely.	Must be current.
A current Biometric Immigration Document (Biometric Residence Permit) issued by the Home Office to the holder indicating that the person named is allowed to stay indefinitely in the UK, or has no time limit on their stay in the UK.	UK
Online evidence of immigration status. Either via the View and Prove service or using the BRP or BRC online service. Issued by the Home Office to the employer or prospective employer, which indicates that the named person may stay in the UK and is permitted to do the work in question. Note: this includes the EUSS digital status confirmation.	Must be valid.
A passport endorsed to show that the holder is exempt from immigration control, is allowed to stay indefinitely in the UK, has the right of abode in the UK, or has no time limit on their stay in the UK.	Must be current and valid.
An Immigration Status Document issued by the Home Office to the holder with an endorsement indicating that the named person is allowed to stay indefinitely in the UK or has no time limit on their stay in the UK, together with an official document giving the person's permanent National Insurance number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.	Must be current
A passport endorsed to show that the holder is allowed to stay in the UK and is currently allowed to do the type of work in question.	Must be current and valid

A current Biometric Immigration Document (Biometric Residence Permit) issued by the Home Office to the holder which indicates that the named person can currently stay in the UK and is allowed to do the work in question.	UK
A document issued by the Home Office to a family member of an EEA or Swiss citizen, and which indicates that the holder is permitted to stay in the United Kingdom for a time limited period and to do the type of work in question.	Must be current
A frontier worker permit issued under regulation 8 of the Citizens' Rights (Frontier Workers) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020	UK
A Immigration Status Document containing a photograph issued by the Home Office to the holder with a valid endorsement indicating that the named person may stay in the UK, and is allowed to do the type of work in question, together with an official document giving the person's permanent National Insurance number and their name issued by a Government agency or a previous employer.	Must be current
A document issued by the Home Office showing that the holder has made an application for leave to enter or remain under Appendix EU to the immigration rules on or before 30 June 2021 together with a Positive Verification Notice from the Home Office Employer Checking Service.	
An Application Registration Card issued by the Home Office stating that the holder is permitted to take the employment in question, together with a Positive Verification Notice from the Home Office Employer Checking Service.	UK
A Positive Verification Notice issued by the Home Office Employer Checking Service to the employer or prospective employer, which indicates that the named person may stay in the UK and is permitted to do the work in question.	UK