GUIDANCE ON CHECKING DOCUMENTATION FOR AUTHENTICITY

Introduction
Checking document authenticity is an integral part of the verification of identity checks. No single form of identification can be fully guaranteed as genuine and therefore the verification process must include a number of key documents. This guidance gives tips on what to consider when checking documents for authenticity.

Passports (UK or 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, poor paper and 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 that 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 also 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.

Visas
- Check for signs of alteration to the passport number or personal and issue details. Make sure details correspond with information in the individual's passport.
- Check security features, such as watermarks, are intact.
- Check the image on the visa for signs of substitution.
- Check the wording for evidence of alteration or spelling mistakes.

Photo-card Driving Licences

New driving licences now contain similar security features to those present in passports.
- Examine the licence carefully, looking for any damage or adjustments.
- Ensure that the printed details have not been changed.
- Check that watermarks and security features are intact.
- Photographs will always be in greyscale, check this matches the applicant.
- Check the biographical details (i.e. name and date of birth) match the details of the applicant
- 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 applicant's date of birth which appears in Section A of the counterpart document.

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 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, which appears on the verification ID.

UK Citizen Photo-card

- 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 card holder.
- Every Citizen Card displays UV (ultra-violet) markings in the form of two '100% proof' logos.

Birth Certificates

Birth certificates are not wholly reliable for the purpose of verifying a person'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 certificates issued by the General Register Office will state 'certified copy' on the birth certificate.

- Check the quality of paper used - genuine certificates use a high grade.
- When 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 the month in words and the year in figures.
- Check the name and date of birth given in the application match those given in the birth certificate

Supporting Documentation

Documents such as utility bills and back statements support an individual's identity and proof of address but are not identity documents in themselves. Modern IT and the internet mean that supporting documents can be easily obtained or forged and, unlike identity documents, do not have many security features that you can easily check. The following checks will help to identify any inconsistencies or anomalies.

- Check documents have not been printed off from online bills or statements – most companies will provide hard copies to customers on request.

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- Check that the document is on original quality headed letterhead paper. Pay particular attention to the company logo, as logos lose their quality when photocopied or scanned
- Check for even folds on original documents – the vast majority of bills are machine-folded before being sent to customers.

General Tips on Verification of Identity

- Don't take documents at face value; ensure that they are checked thoroughly. Fake documentation is increasingly available online.
- Don't check documents in isolation – cross-reference with other data supplied as part of the recruitment process. If the data doesn't match, ask for further evidence.

Doubts on Authenticity of Information
Your checks may return information that contradicts the details provided by the applicant and raises concerns. In this situation you should:
- Contact your recruitment contact who will be able to advise you on the action to take
- Proceed in a sensitive manner – there is often a reasonable explanation for apparent inconsistencies
- Attempt to address your concerns directly with the candidate – you may wish to call them back for a second interview so that you can follow up with the relevant sources.

Further Information
Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) at : www.cpni.gov.uk.
Home Office guidance at : www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk
NHS Protect at : www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk