



Home Office

Use and Change of Names

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Content

Introduction	3
Policy Rationale	3
What is the requirement of the policy?	3
What supporting evidence is required to support a change of name?	4
What are the grounds for refusing to change a name on a Home Office issued document.....	4
What checks should be undertaken before allowing a change of name on a Home Office document?	5
Exceptions to guidance	5
Public safety grounds.....	5
Transgender people.....	5
Foreign nationals without passports.....	6
Dual nationals	6
Recognised multiple names	7
Adoption, Birth and Naturalisation certificates.....	7
Annex A: Use of Names in passports.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Introduction

1. This document sets out the Home Office's approach to a request for a change of name on official documents, such as the British passport, Home Office Travel Documents (HOTD) and biometric residence permits (BRP).
2. It aligns how changes of name are handled across the Home Office ensuring there is a consistent approach for British citizens and foreign nationals, so that a person only holds the documents listed in paragraph 7 in the name they use for all official purposes.
3. The policy provides a consistent approach across Home Office. Annex A sets out the additional requirements concerning the use of and change of names in issuing a British passport. These additional safeguards are in place to meet the specific security considerations associated with the issuing of a passport.

Policy Rationale

4. The vast majority of people living in the UK change their names on official documents issued by the Home Office for perfectly legitimate reasons, such as when they get married. The policy is focussed on achieving two aims: first, helping the genuine applicant to obtain documents in a change of name with the minimum but necessary level of supporting information; and second, deterring, disrupting and detecting those who change their names in order to commit crime or avoid detection.
5. It aims to make it more difficult for people to change their identities to support criminality and to ensure there is a consistent approach to handling applications to change names contained on official documents. This policy aligns the various approaches to managing name changes across the Home Office.
6. The policy's aim is to ensure the right to change names in the UK is not subject to abuse. It is particularly targeted at those people who intend to change their identity to commit an offence, such as fraud or to evade detection, such as registered sex offenders who want to disguise their previous background. It also aims to deter frequent and frivolous changes of names where it is not clear that the person intends to use the name for all purposes.

What is the requirement of the policy?

7. This policy applies to applications to changes of names and identities to the following documents:
 - British Passport, including Emergency travel documents and emergency passports;
 - Home Office Travel Documents;
 - Biometric residence permits;
 - Visas;
 - Right of Abode and certificates of entitlement; and

- Residence Documents issued to EEA nationals and their family members, including derivative categories.

8. Where a person is seeking to change an identity on one of the Home Office documents listed above the person is required to provide supporting evidence that they intend using that identity for all purposes of their life. This may include a marriage certificate or a deed poll along with other supporting documentary evidence that the new name is being used for all purposes.

What supporting evidence is required to support a change of name?

9. All applications to change names must be supported by documentary evidence which resemble the acquired name and show the linkage to the previous name, such as a marriage certificate or a deed poll, except where the change is a requirement to protect a vulnerable victim of crime or a witness or where other legislation provides specific requirements.

10. Holders of non-British passports and national identity cards must also provide evidence they have amended the details in other passport(s) and any national identity cards they hold, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as those set out in paragraphs 18 to 30. The names used in these documents take precedent to names used in other supporting documents, such as marriage certificates and deed polls.

11. Foreign nationals who apply to become British citizens may be registered or naturalised in their married name. However, if a new citizen wants a British passport in their married name they must change the name on their other passport(s), travel documents and national identity card(s) to reflect their married name before submitting their application. Exceptions to this approach are set out in paragraphs 18 to 30 below.

12. The Home Office will not normally issue a document in a new name where a person has secured an entitlement to the document using a fraudulent identity.

What are the grounds for refusing to change a name on a Home Office issued document

13. The Home Office reserves the right not to issue a document in a new name to a person who is either a registered sex offender or was convicted of an offence involving the use of false or fraudulently obtained genuine documents. Any decision not to issue a document will depend upon the purpose for the change of name, the nature of the offence committed and whether the change of name may be used to perpetrate further offending. However, such restrictions will not go beyond the time the person ceases to be recorded on the Sex Offenders Register or after their conviction is spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. A situation where an offender is also considered to be a vulnerable victim or witness and a threat to life exists, is one example of where we may choose to issue a document in a new name.

14. Applications to change a name on a Home Office document will be refused if it includes one or more of the following:

- numbers or symbols;
- punctuation marks other than hyphens or apostrophes;
- too many characters in Forenames/Surname to fit onto the face of the document;
- language which may cause outrage or offence or are deliberately or inadvertently likely to offend sectors of the community;
- wording that promotes criminal activities; or
- a trade marked name, or is subject to copyright, except where the applicant produces written permission from the owner.

15. A Home Office document which is a record of an event, such as a birth certificate or a naturalisation certificate, cannot normally be amended unless there are exceptional circumstances. This may include where the person was issued a Gender Recognition Certificate in his or her acquired gender or where a UK Court has approved adoption. Where a naturalisation of registration document is changed any subsequently issued passports should be amended as part of the name change process.

What checks should be undertaken before allowing a change of name on a Home Office document?

16. When a change of name is made for a purpose other than marriage, adoption, change of gender or as a result of needing protection as a vulnerable person both the previous and the acquired names may be checked against other data to prevent criminality, including police records and with other law enforcement organisations.

17. Where the Home Office has accepted a request to change a name on a Home Office document, the law enforcement records may be updated to reflect the new name and the link to the old name.

Exceptions to guidance

• Public safety grounds

18. Where there is a need to protect persons from risk of harm separate arrangements should be implemented which protect the identity of the person who is seeking to change their name. In addition, consideration will be given to allowing the person to use more than one name for all purposes.

19. The type of people who are included in this group are:

- Vulnerable victims of crime (e.g. victims of domestic violence, stalking); and
- Vulnerable witnesses.

20. Where a vulnerable victim or witness is seeking to change their name to prevent them from harm, their application should be supported by an appropriate authority, such as the police, refuge service or other accredited organisation.

• Transgender people

21. Transgender foreign nationals whose national authorities do not recognise changes to names and/ or gender in their passports or national identity cards will be able to obtain a BRP in their acquired name and gender, providing the person can demonstrate they are using the acquired name and gender for all purposes.

22. Where a transgender person applies to become a British citizen, they will normally be naturalised in the name and gender contained in their passport, Home Office Travel Document and national identity card. However, when they have been unable to obtain a passport from their country in their acquired gender and were issued with a BRP in their acquired name and gender they can be issued with a naturalisation certificate in the identity contained on their BRP.

23. Transgender people who hold non-British passports and identity cards in their former name and gender will normally be expected to align their other passport(s) or identity card(s) to reflect their acquired name and gender, so that they are using one name for all purposes, unless they are from a country that does not recognise their acquired gender and are unable to obtain a foreign passport in their new details.

• Foreign nationals without passports

24. Foreign nationals wanting to change their names on Home Office issued immigration documents must apply for either a Transfer of Conditions (if they have temporary leave) or a No-Time Limit (if they have indefinite leave). Where a foreign national applies to change their name and claims not to hold a foreign issued passport or EEA Identity Card, the Home Office will only change the name on their BRP where the applicant is a recognised refugee or stateless person or has been granted Humanitarian Protection where it has been accepted that they cannot approach their national authorities. All other foreign nationals must produce a passport or their EEA Identity Card in the new name when applying to change their name. Successful applicants will receive evidence of their new name in the form of a BRP.

25. Where a person holds Home Office issued documents in the old name, such as Home Office Travel Documents, BRPs and older forms of immigration evidence they must surrender them when applying for a change of name. When a BRP is issued in a new name any Home Office Travel Documents containing the old name will be cancelled and the person will need to make a separate application for a replacement Travel Document in their new name if they want to travel overseas.

• Dual nationals

26. Normally dual nationals will be expected to align the name on their foreign passport or identity card with the names requested on Home Office issued documents.

27. However, where individuals can provide evidence that they are unable to change their name in their foreign issued documents, the Home Office will exceptionally consider allowing them to use a different name in a Home Office issued document (See Annex A). This may include married naturalised British citizens who are unable to change the family name on their foreign passport due to legal requirements. Such individuals may also be asked to provide evidence that they are living in the new name for all other official purposes.

28. Where, in exceptional circumstances, a different name is allowed for dual nationals then this will be recorded on Home Office systems and as an observation in the British Passport.

- **Recognised multiple names**

29. British citizens who hold warranted titles or are known more commonly by their stage or professional name may use both names. An observation may be included in their passport. An example of this is when members of the House of Lords use both their titled names and their given names.

30. Foreign nationals will only have the name contained in their passport and national identity card placed on their BRP.

Adoption, Birth and Naturalisation certificates

31. These documents are records of events and changes to these records are not covered by this policy.

