



Home Office

Identity Standards impostor and age discrepancy cases

Version 1.0

Identity standards for handling impostor and age discrepancy cases for UKVI applications.

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About this guidance

This guidance explains how decision makers must identify and manage cases where there may be an impostor concern or a discrepancy about a person's age. It sets out the checks to complete, the evidence to consider, and when to escalate concerns, so that identity decisions are made consistently, fairly and in line with the required standard.

This guidance is primarily for:

- Immigration, nationality and asylum decision makers and decision makers
- Entry Clearance Decision Makers (ECDM), also referred to as Entry Clearance Officers (ECO)
- any official making a decision on behalf of the Secretary of State

Border Force and Immigration Enforcement officers need to be aware of this guidance to understand the basis of a person's identity.

The identity requirements described in this guidance do not apply to British citizens or holders of a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode, who are not subject to immigration control. It does apply to British nationals who are subject to control.

Decision maker means immigration, nationality and asylum decision makers and Border Force officers.

People / person means applicants, claimants, individuals, and dependants.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors, then email the Identity Security Team.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance, Rules and Forms team.

Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **1.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **22 October 2026**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This is new guidance.

Related content

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Impostor

An impostor is any person who is presenting an identity document as their own, despite not being its rightful holder. They may look similar to the person shown in the document. Identifying situations where an impostor risk may be present is vital for protecting the integrity of the immigration system and preventing identity fraud.

This section lays out the checks that must be carried out when comparing a person to the image(s) contained in their documents or supporting evidence, what indicators may suggest that the identity does not belong to the person, and the steps that must be taken where inconsistencies or concerns arise.

Facial comparison

Facial comparison is used to confirm that the identity belongs to the person presenting the document.

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When an impostor concern may arise

An impostor concern arises where the person's physical appearance does not reasonably resemble the characteristics of the person in the travel or identity document.

Where concerns arise, you must follow the required escalation process.

You must look for material and observable differences between the biometric enrolment photograph and other images, such as:

- significant differences in facial structure or proportions
- apparent age differences not explained by lighting or angle
- missing or new distinctive features (for example scars or birthmarks)
- markedly different appearance

These signs mean you must do more checks to make sure all the photos and documents are for the same person. This will likely include a manual face check and, if needed, passing the case to a senior officer or a colleague through the escalation process.

Additionally, as a tool to aid the examination, the decision maker may benefit from turning the images or photographs upside down (this could be uploaded images, images contained in travel documents or images captured at the enrolment stage). This will take away any distraction, and the decision maker is able to concentrate on the features individually when comparing the images.

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Handling applications where you suspect age discrepancy

If a person says they are a certain age, but this does not match how they look, photos, or other identity details, you must investigate it. This includes asking for more evidence and passing the case to a manager or a specialist assessor team where relevant.

Age is an important part of someone's identity. It can affect whether an application meets the Rules and has safeguarding implications. You must check if the claimed age matches how the person looks and the evidence they have given.

Assessing documentary reliability

You must check how trustworthy the documents used to show age and identity are, for example passports, birth certificates, and national identity cards. Keep in mind relevant and reliable information published by the Home Office, other governments or recognised international organisations about the reliability of particular document types or issuing authorities.

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Image comparison, claimed age, and appearance

You must compare the person's face and overall look with the images in their identity documents, biometric enrolment photos, and any other supporting images. This helps you decide if the images show the same person.

You must compare the identity document photo with the current image and any new image taken, including liveness checks where available. Review all images to see if the claimed age looks consistent across them. If you see differences that you cannot explain (for example, the person looks much older or younger in one image), you must flag your concerns with an Entry Clearance Manager or Technical Officer. This may indicate a possible identity issue.

Where age cannot be established

If you cannot confirm the person's age to the required standard, or there is a serious mismatch between their claimed age, how they look, and the evidence, you may need to take further steps.

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In this guidance, the person must prove their claimed identity, including their age. Your role is not to determine or assign a specific age. You are to decide whether the claimed age can be assured to the required standard as part of identity checks.

In considering these matters, you should have regard to the relevant principles in the Assessing Age guidance, albeit recognising that it has a different scope and purpose. It principally covers age decisions and Merton-compliant age assessments conducted in the UK, whereas this guidance concerns whether a person's claimed age can be assured as part of establishing their identity. In particular:

- Merton-compliant age assessments determine age on balance-of-probabilities
- a decision on age must be made and an age assigned
- the guidance includes the 'significantly over 18' policy

Under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), people can qualify as a dependent child up to age 21. Where there is doubt about age in an EUSS case, you must apply the steps in the Identity Standards guidance.

For entry clearance cases, you must follow the Identity Standards guidance. You should have regards for the general evidence-based approach in the Assessing Age guidance, including considering all available evidence, giving the person an opportunity to address concerns, and recording clear reasons for the decision.

However, procedures specific to in-country age disputes, such as face-to-face age assessments or Local Authority processes would not apply.

If you still cannot confirm age and identity to the required standard after taking reasonable steps, you must clearly record this and progress the case under the relevant route guidance.

Referral for management assessment

If there is an age mismatch, or you think the person may be an impostor, refer the case for a management assessment. Each route team must have access to a management assessment panel. The panel (usually 2 decision makers and a Higher Executive Officer manager, such as a technical specialist or Entry Clearance Manager) will review all identity evidence and decide if age and identity can be assured. If identity cannot be confirmed to the required standard, the application must be refused or rejected.

Decision making where age remains in doubt

If you have reviewed all evidence, made the appropriate checks, and asked for any extra information, but you still do not believe the evidence supports the claimed age, the application must be refused or rejected (depending on the route and stage). In doing so, you must not set a specific age for the applicant. Your role is to decide whether the claimed age and identity details can be reliably linked to the person.

If the claimed age matches the person's appearance and the supporting evidence, you must continue with the application. If there are differences or doubts, consider if more checks are needed. This can include sending supporting documents to the enrichment team for verification, where appropriate. These checks can help you judge if the evidence is genuine or reliable, but they do not confirm the person's age.

If you cannot confirm the person's identity (including age) to the required standard, you must treat the application as invalid where applicable, consider whether to refuse where an age requirement is specified in the relevant Immigration Rules, or consider suitability if there is evidence of deception.

You may reassess identity where new evidence or information has come to light or where you are concerned that it was not properly assessed previously. In reaching your further decision on identity, you should have regard to the fact that the identity was previously accepted and/or any reasons you have for departing from it. It will generally be appropriate to inform the applicant of your concerns, and give them an opportunity to provide representations, before you make your final decision.

If the person already has permission that is based on an identity you can no longer rely on, consider whether person should be notified that the Home Office is minded to cancel their permission and given an opportunity to respond before a decision is made. Following consideration of any representations received, consider whether cancellation is appropriate under Part Suitability of the Immigration Rules. Under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), permission may be cancelled, curtailed, or revoked, as set out in Annex 3 to [Appendix EU](#).

Only act only if you are not satisfied as to the person's identity, or if there is evidence of deception. These are different. Not being satisfied is not the same as proving deception, and they can lead to different outcomes. Any cancellation decision must use the correct legal basis and follow the right immigration rule and guidance.

Biographic changes identified after a decision (including Update My Details)

If a person asks to change their personal details after a decision has been made (including through Update My Details (UMD) or by post), you must use the same identity standards as in this guidance.

You **must not** accept changes to key details (especially date of birth) automatically. Check the request against existing Home Office records and the identity relied on

before. Consider if the change could affect the original decision, for example where age mattered for validity, eligibility, safeguarding, or route requirements.

If the change conflicts with, or weakens, the identity you accepted before, you must record it, assess it, and take the right action for the route (for example treat a later application as invalid, refuse under the Rules, or consider suitability if there is evidence of deception). A change to personal details on its own does not prove deception. But if the evidence shows the person knowingly gave false or misleading information, you must consider the deception guidance.

Sponsors and related applications

Where an application is supported by a sponsor and there are doubts regarding the person's age or identity, you must consider whether this has implications for:

- other linked applications, or other applications supported by the same sponsor
- whether the claimed relationship makes sense
- the plausibility of the claimed relationship
- whether the claimed biological relationship is possible, given the ages and appearances of the people involved
- any signs of help to cheat the system, deception, or safeguarding concerns

If you find these signs, you must escalate the case to the right safeguarding or enforcement teams, following existing guidance.

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