Establishing Identity

The interview
An interview must be arranged when:
- It is established through validation and stringent trace procedures in DCI that a Departmental record does not exist; and
- There is a DSS business need to create a record and allocate a National Insurance Number.

The interviewing officer must:
- Be suitably trained in interviewing techniques; and
- Obtain a signed statement from the person.

For persons whose first language is not English, see BA booklet 'Bridging the Language Barrier' copies can be obtained from:

DSS Communications Group
2E22
Quarry House
Fax: 0113 232 7939

When interviewing the person discretion should be used when deciding what questions to ask and the person should not be led into answering any questions. This is particularly important if there are doubts about the validity of the application.

The purpose of the interview is to establish identity by building an overall picture of the person.

Questions should be asked that can be confirmed in the course of, or after, the interview. For example ask about:
- Previous employment
- Attendance at schools, colleges and universities
- Admission to hospital
- Claims to benefit
- Periods abroad
- Previous addresses

If there are any inconsistencies in the statement they must be clarified.

What types of questions should be asked? Questions about:

Personal details
Family details
Arrival and journey to the United Kingdom
Employment history
Education details
Benefit claims

Any miscellaneous questions appropriate to the case

Aim to build up a picture of a person’s history and background. Any documentation may support part of this. Any aspects that are unclear should be clarified, and if there is any doubt or suspicion the appropriate fraud area should be contacted.

Permission should be sought prior to contacting any of the organisations, other Agencies or third parties (outside DBS and other Government Departments) they have given you details of. They will not be able to verify the identity of the person but should be able to corroborate the details given.

There are many documents which can be produced to help to establish identity.

It is unreasonable to expect every person to be able to produce similar documentation.

An individual’s circumstances will affect what evidence they have available to them, eg a person of no fixed abode, a traveller or victim of a disaster, eg house fire, may not have any household bills or other documents.

The emphasis should be to concentrate on building a picture of the person through questioning. The fact that documents cannot be produced may support a person’s history. Check information with third parties, other Agencies, etc.

When confirming or establishing identity normally only original documents should be accepted.

Photocopies can be accepted with an acceptable explanation of where the originals are. This should be corroborated if there is any doubt. Photocopies have greater weight if they are notarised by one of the following:

- An established civil servant
- A member of the Foreign Service of the United Kingdom or Her Majesty’s Overseas Civil Service or a British Diplomatic or Consular Officer
- A doctor or a surgeon registered under the law of the country where the declaration is made
- A minister of religion
- A barrister, solicitor or advocate authorised to practise in the country where the declaration is made
- A Notary Public or any other person allowed to administer oaths in the country where the declaration is made
- An officer of a bank authorised to sign documents on their behalf
- A magistrate

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No document on its own can establish a person's identity. The following are examples of documents a person may use to support their identity:

- Current valid full passport. This includes a Home Office Travel Document issued by the Home Office when it is not possible for a person to obtain a passport from their own National Authorities.
- Standard Acknowledgement Letter (SAL). This is a Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) acknowledgement of an application for asylum. It is issued only when evidence of identity has been established for HO purposes. There are various issues of SAL, as due to security features, they are reviewed frequently. All SALs should now:
  - Be valid until a decision is made by the Home Office on the Asylum Claim
  - Hold a photograph which is overstamped by the Immigration Office
- EL3. This is similar to a SAL issued to persons from the former Yugoslavia granted exceptional leave to enter/remain for a limited period
- A national identity card issued by an EU/EEA member state

The documents listed above are considered more secure in their issue and control. However, all documents must be linked to the person providing them and support the information obtained through interviewing. As with all documents they should be checked for authenticity.
Examples of some other documents that may be produced are:

- Form GV3 (a one way travel document issued by UK Embassies abroad)
- UK Residence Permit
- Full driving licence
- Local authority rent card
- Council Tax or Community Charge documents
- Life assurance / insurance policies
- Mortgage repayment documents
- Paid fuel / telephone bill in person’s name
- Marriage certificate
- Divorce / annulment papers
- Certificate of employment in HM Forces
- Certificate of employment under the Crown
- Certificate of employment in merchant navy
- P714 (tax certificate)
- Wage slip from recent employer
- Solicitors’ letters containing information which helps to establish identity
- Certificate of registration
- Full or short birth / adoption certificate
- Cheque book
- Cheque guarantee card
- Store / credit cards
- TU membership card
- Travel pass with photograph affixed
- Apprenticeship indentures
- Vehicle registration / motor insurance documents

Some documents are more easily obtained than others.

This list is not exhaustive. If a document can support part of the person’s history or background it is more use than a document which cannot be tied in with the person providing it. If there is doubt use local arrangements and refer to the appropriate fraud area.

Birth, adoption and marriage certificates
These certificates can be used to verify a person’s date of birth and nationality. They can help support a person’s identity but they must not be used as evidence of identity on their own whether they are:

- Full
- Short
- Original, ie issued at or near time of the event; or
- Non-contemporaneous, ie recently obtained certificates

Recent issue birth and adoption certificates from the UK carry a statement to the effect that the certificate is not evidence of identity.
Some people may be unable to produce documents issued at or near the time of the event.

Consideration should be given whether the documents have been obtained purely for the purposes of Departmental business, e.g. a copy certificate issued shortly before a benefit claim. Irish birth certificates are not issued automatically; they have to be applied for.

It should be decided if it is reasonable for the person to be able to produce only these documents.

In other cases the nature of the documentation may support its recent issue such as a:
- Fuel bill;
- Final wage slip

Although these documents can support a person's circumstances, it may still be necessary to obtain confirmation by:
- Asking for further documentation;
- Checking with the employer or fuel company, etc about previous details.

Carefully question a person who has lived in the UK for some time but can only produce evidence issued shortly before the date of the contact.

Consideration should be given to the following questions:
- Why are there no original documents?
- Can anything be produced which is older than the documents already submitted or any further information given to establish identity?
- Do the reasons given support the fact that all the documents are of recent issue?
- Are there any organisations from whom it would be possible to obtain confirmation such as:
  - Employer / former employer?
  - Tax office?
  - Insurance companies?
  - Fuel boards?

If no other form of documentation can be supplied it should be considered, through questioning whether this is reasonable.

Identity is not established if:
- The person has been interviewed and there is doubt surrounding their background and history; and
- All corroboration with third parties, etc has been exhausted and there is no confirmation or tie up with the person's story;
- It is unreasonable that the person should have no original documents or other evidence available to them.
There are very few individuals who will not be able to produce some form of documentary evidence. Those who cannot are likely to be:
- Persons of no fixed abode / homeless
- Travellers
- Victims of disaster, eg house fire etc; or
- Certain persons from abroad, eg asylum seekers

Each case should be decided carefully. It should be identified, through questioning, why there are no available documents this should be corroborated by contacting:
- Third parties
- Other Agencies and organisations

A householder should normally be able to produce some form of evidence relating to their household expenses, such as:
- A paid bill for household expenses;
- Mortgage details; or
- Council Tax demands

A homeless person is unlikely to be able to produce any of these documents and may find it difficult to produce any documentation at all.

However, it would not be unreasonable to ask for other documentation such as:
- A birth certificate; or
- Documents relating to a time before the person became homeless.

Do not demand documents if it is unreasonable for the person to have or obtain them.

Remember documents can help to support the identity of a person. They do not establish identity on their own.

Question them about their background as this may help in the process. You can ask if they have ever:
- Worked, and if so for whom
- Claimed or received any state benefits; and
- Had a NINO before

Ask if the person is in touch with:
- Support group
- An official organisation
- A legal representative

In these or similar circumstances the verbal statement will play a large part in the process of establishing identity. The person's permission should be obtained before contacting a third party.
If possible, any information should be checked with a third party. If confirmed, accept the person's statement unless there are grounds to doubt it.

The following people may not have a NINO because of individual circumstances and background:
- People from abroad
- People with a nomadic way of life
- Young people not registered under automatic procedures (eg, people who have been in the care of the LA prior to age 16)
- The partner in a relationship who was born before 1948 and has never worked or claimed any benefits

It should be considered carefully why a person does not possess a NINO if they do not fall within any of the categories listed above. It should be remembered that possession of a NINO does not establish identity.