

How to change your name and update your personal records

The law throughout the United Kingdom permits people to change their name at any time and without any special permission or process. This applies to everyone, including people who change their gender.

In its simplest form anyone can change their name simply by announcing that fact to everyone who they deal with. In practice, many organisations, (such as banks or workplaces) have paperwork for you to complete in order to alter the records they keep about you and may require paperwork from you to evidence the change of name.

You can find more information from the Government on how to change your name and free forms here <https://www.gov.uk/change-name-deed-poll>

Information on changing your name is however very confusing and we will try and summarise it for you. There are essentially two processes that you can use to change your name, Deed Poll and Statutory Declaration.

Deed Poll

You can prepare a deed poll yourself [here](#). Your self-prepared deed poll must be witnessed by two persons. This website creates a deed poll for free. <https://freedeepoll.org.uk/>

Whilst there are many companies who will accept a self-prepared deed poll, there may be companies who would only accept an enrolled deed poll, although this is unusual.

An enrolled deed poll is enrolled with the Royal Courts of Justice after which it will be held in the National Archives. At the same time, notification of your change of name has to be placed into the London Gazette. There are very few people that go through the process of enrolling their Deed Poll. There is a set cost for the process of enrolment and you have to organise it.

In order to have a self-prepared deed poll enrolled you have to get it witnessed by people who have known you for at least 10 years. The witnesses must then complete a statutory declaration (statement of fact that they are who they are and have known you for 10 years) which has to then be sworn in front of a solicitor, Commissioner of Oaths or an officer of the Senior Court (which will incur a fee). Given the complicated system above there are many companies and solicitors that will prepare a deed poll for you.



In the case of solicitors they will prepare the paperwork, obtain evidence from you that you are a British Citizen or have a Certificate of Naturalisation and then get you to sign the prepared paperwork which they will then witness, thereby eliminating the need for you obtaining other witnesses. Charges vary from practice to practice and you may want to check whether they include enrolling your deed poll as part of their fee. They are also likely to charge for additional official copies.

There are many on-line companies who provide a deed poll service. They again will prepare the paperwork for you to sign and will require evidence from you to say that you are an entitled British Citizen or hold a Certificate of Naturalisation. They will send you the paperwork which you will then sign and get witnessed by people who have known you but are not related to you. Because the company has independently verified your identity and entitlement, most companies and organisations will accept this Deed Poll. Charges will again vary and it is likely they will charge for additional official copies.

In the examples above both the solicitors and the on-line companies will then hold copies of the documentation should you ever misplace yours.

Statutory Declaration

This is often known as a 'stat dec'. Essentially a statutory declaration is a written statement of fact that is signed in the presence of a:

- Solicitor
- Notary of the public
- Justice of the Peace
- Commissioner for Oaths
- Any other qualified person

The difference between a 'stat dec' and a self-prepared deed poll is that a statutory declaration must be signed in the presence of one of the above people and does not require you to find other witnesses to sign it. A useful template is provided [here](#).

Although a statutory declaration can be witnessed by 'any other qualified person' in our experience to avoid problems with companies and organisations accepting the document, it is easiest to get it witnessed by a solicitor. Call different practices and ask how much they charge to witness a statutory declaration in advance of booking an appointment as prices can vary. They may include one set fee for witnessing a number of official copies, or they may charge per document.

It may be an idea to ask the solicitor to keep one of the documents for their records in case you ever lose yours.

You can include your title on any deed poll or statutory declaration should you wish. The present options are Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms. You can choose whichever of these you want should you wish to include it on the paperwork; you cannot include Mx or any other title not yet recognised as legal.

Changing your name officially will mean that your identity documents become out of date, because they will no longer show your legal name. This means that you need

to be ready to make changes to your other legal documents, such as your passport or driving licence, when you change your name legally.

Specific processes for certain agencies – Changing Name and Gender

Some organisations have specific procedures for processing name changes relating to changes in social gender role. Employers, educational establishments, registration bodies, your local NHS GP practice, hospitals, utility companies, and service suppliers such as banks should be prepared to change your details on request. Some may ask for evidence in the form of a statutory declaration or deed poll, but that is all the process should involve.

HM Revenue

If you inform HMRC of a change of name they will update your personal records for:

- Income Tax and National Insurance
- tax credits and benefits, including Child Benefit
- services, including the Pension Service

HMRC will update their records with your new name and title but for legal reasons, they cannot amend all of their records with your affirmed gender (male or female are available) without sight of a full Gender Recognition Certificate.

Will alter your name on their records and will issue a new plastic National Insurance Number Card with that name on it.

Will not alter anyone's National Insurance number under any circumstances. There is no gender indication within the number and therefore no point to do so.

A change of name on its own does not alter the rest of your national insurance / tax computer records.

Will not change your gender indicator without a formal legal process. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are usually told automatically when you change gender legally as part of the Gender Recognition process. Once you have a gender recognition certificate HMRC will:

- update its records with your gender and any name change, if relevant
- tell the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- restrict your records so only specialist staff at HMRC and DWP can access them
- hand your tax affairs to HMRC's Public Department 1 - contact them if you have questions about your tax or National Insurance

You can find more information about the possible tax implications of changing your name and/ or legal gender [here](#).

If your name change is alongside a change in gender social role but you have not applied for or been issued with a Gender Recognition Certificate, you can ask HMRC to put your details into a restricted section meaning that only certain people within their organisation can see your previous name details, thereby protecting your

gender identity. To ask for this, send your name change documentation to the address below.

HMRC
Special Section D
Room BP9207
Benton Park View
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE98 1ZZ

Please be aware though, that it means that if you need to talk to someone from HMRC about your tax, their general helpline will not be able to deal with the call and they will have to arrange for someone from Section D to contact you, which may not be straight away.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Will change their records of your name and issue you with an updated driving license on written request.

Will issue you with an amended driver number. Your driver number includes a gender marker. This is changed to reflect your gender, so that anyone inspecting your driving licence will see a gender marker that is more congruent for you. Presently they only use the gender markers of male or female.

HM Passport Office

You can find out about the process for changing your passport for reasons of change of social gender role [here](#).

In general, when you have changed your name and are living in your preferred social gender role, you can ask your GP for a letter to give to the passport office to confirm that the change is of social gender identity and intended to be permanent. The process can sometimes involve an interview so you may wish to seek advice directly from the passport office before submitting any forms or paying any fees.

Department of Health

You can change your name on your health records at any time but you should only change it when you are certain that this is your new permanent name and gender role.

You can either tell your GP or directly tell your Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which you can find [here](#).

Inform them that you are changing your name and would like your gender marker on your records to be changed, informing them of your preferred choice (presently the only options are male, female or indeterminate). They may ask to see a legal name change document like a deed poll or statutory declaration but it is not a requirement that you have or present any documentation. You should make your request in writing and sign it. The GP practice may have a form that they would prefer you to use. The GMC offer guidance to GPs about the process [here](#).

The GP writes to the Registration Office at the CCG. The GP may write a letter of support confirming the gender role change and that this change is intended to be permanent, but this is not a requirement.

The Registration Office then writes to the Personal Demographics Service National Back Office. The National Back Office will create a new healthcare record and give it a new NHS number.

The GP surgery changes any remaining patient information including the gender marker, pronouns and names.

Everyone has a legal right to change their name and gender on their NHS records if appropriate.

It is essential that you tell the staff at NRGDS when you have a new NHS number, we will not be informed of this otherwise and it may lead to delays in treatment.

Gender Recognition Certificates as proof of gender identity

Some organisations may mistakenly believe that they are not supposed to change their records to show your new name and appropriate title (Mr, Miss, etc.) until you have obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate. This is incorrect and in most cases would constitute discrimination.

It is mainly the case that nobody can demand to see or record the details of a Gender Recognition Certificate, if you have one, before they will alter your gender identity on their records. If someone requires proof of your legal gender then you could show them your birth certificate.

One exception to this is HMRC who will usually be automatically informed of your Gender Recognition Certificate unless you state otherwise. If you have not opted for them to be automatically informed then they can require you to provide your GRC before they will alter the gender marker on your records.

Other than the exception above the Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) exists only for the Gender Recognition Panel to instruct the Registrar of Births to make a new entry in their register, from which a birth certificate can be drawn.

The GRC states clearly that it has no other purpose. Recording sight of a GRC would automatically lead to a breach of Section 22 of the Gender Recognition Act, since sight of the record by any other person would constitute an unlawful disclosure of protected information.

It is expected that there will be a consultation on the current use of GRCs, and how they might be adapted, in the coming years.