



# Changing your name and title

## A factsheet for trans and non-binary people

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This factsheet has been produced by UK Trans Info, a national organisation focused on improving the lives on trans and non-binary people. If you'd like to find out more about us or make a donation please visit <http://uktrans.info/our-work>

Further copies of this factsheet can be downloaded from <http://uktrans.info/namechange>



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## 1 Do I need a Gender Recognition Certificate to change my name and/or title?

No, you do not need a GRC to change your name and/or title to ones that better suit your gender identity. In fact you would struggle to get a GRC without having already changed your name and title in this way. As soon as you have changed your name and/or title using the information below, you can start using your new name and title on all documents, including [passports](#), [driving licences](#), [medical records](#) and correspondence with other organisations such as banks and utility companies. You will also be able to get any [past qualification certificates changed](#), and use a special procedure to protect your privacy when having a [DBS \(previously CRB\) check](#). However you will need a GRC before you can get a new birth certificate.

## 2 How do I change my title?

Most titles (such as Mr, Ms, Miss, Mrs and Mx) are not controlled by law in the UK. You can change your title to any of these, or [one of the many other options](#), without doing anything special and without any documentation. Organisations should therefore update your title on request, and if you are only changing your title (and not your name) then you can just write to organisations to ask them to update their records. You can use any of these titles regardless of your legal gender.

Although it is not required or necessary in most cases, it is possible to include your title change on a deed poll or statutory declaration. This can be particularly useful if you are using an uncommon title such as Mx.

Certain titles (such as Dr, Prof, Lord, Sir, etc) are controlled by law and you cannot change your title to them unless you are entitled to use them.

If you are currently entitled to use a gendered **non-inherited** title such as Sir or Lady then you are also entitled to use the other gendered equivalent. For example you can choose between Sir and Dame, or Lord and Lady. However, this does not always apply if you are only allowed to use the title because of who you are married to. For example someone who is legally the wife of a male peer is entitled to use the title Lady, but wouldn't be able to use the title Lord as the same courtesy does not extend to husbands of Baronesses, and nor does it apply in same-sex relationships.

If you are currently entitled to use a gendered **inherited** title such as Viscount or Lord then legally your title does not change unless you obtain a gender recognition certificate. However in order to comply with the Equality Act organisations should refer to you using the other gendered equivalent if you request it.

## 3 What can I change my name to?

In the UK there are almost no restrictions on what name you can change your name to as long as it is not changed for fraudulent purposes. However, it is a bad idea to have names that don't meet the following requirements, because places like the Passport Office and DVLA won't or can't for policy or technical reasons accept them:

- You should have at least two names (eg a first and a last name)
- It should be possible to pronounce your name
- You shouldn't use any punctuation apart from hyphens in double-barrelled names and apostrophes in surnames
- Your name shouldn't be offensive, blasphemous or vulgar
- You shouldn't change your name so that it looks like you have a status or honour that you do not, for instance having "Doctor", "Prince" or "Lord" as your first name

## 4 Can I change my name if I am under 16 years old?

### 4.1 If you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland:

Yes but you will need permission from everyone who has parental responsibility for you - even if you haven't had contact with one or all of them for years. Usually this means the people who are named on your birth certificate or adoption certificate. If you are under a care order then the Local Authority will have parental responsibility so they will have to consent.

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If one (but not all) of the people who has parental responsibility for you is not contactable or refuses to give permission, then the person who does give permission will need to apply to the court for a 'specific issue order'. There is a charge to apply for this court order, but if the person applying is on a low income there may be help available with this. To apply for the specific issue order: (Fees correct May 2015)

- England and Wales: Complete [form C100](#) using guidance notes in [leaflet CB1](#) and send it to a Family Court. The court fee is £215 and information on help with the fee is available [here](#).
- Northern Ireland: Complete [form C1 \(FPC\)](#) and return it to your nearest Magistrate's Court, or complete [form C1 \(FCC\)](#) and return it to a County Court. The court fee is £50 in the Magistrate's Court or £75 in the County Court and information on help with the fee is available [here](#).

If you need to make sure that the other person with parental responsibility does not find out where you live, please contact the court in advance for further advice. Please note that court orders for a change of surname (last name) are often, but not always, declined if you currently share a surname with a parent who doesn't consent. Court orders to change first and/or middle names only are more likely to be successful.

### 4.2 If you live in Scotland:

Yes but you will need permission from at least one person who has parental responsibility for you. Usually this means the people who are named on your birth certificate or adoption certificate. If you are under a care order then the Local Authority will have parental responsibility so they will have to consent.

The person giving permission must also consult with everyone else who has parental responsibilities and rights, as far as practical, and take their views into account. It doesn't matter if the other people disagree, but they must be consulted. If they have lost touch with any of the other people who have parental responsibility then they must take all practical steps to try to get in touch, but if that fails then they can continue without consulting them.

If the person giving permission does not want to consult with everyone else who has parental responsibility, then the person who does give permission will need to apply to the court for a 'specific issue order'. To do this complete an initial writ on [form G1](#) and send it to your nearest Sheriff Court. More information is [here](#). The court fee is £87 (correct May 2015) and information on help with the fee is available [here](#). If you need to make sure that the other person with parental responsibility doesn't find out where you live, please contact the court in advance for further advice.

Please note that court orders for a change of surname (last name) are often, but not always, declined if you currently share a surname with a parent who doesn't consent. Court orders to change first and/or middle names only are more likely to be successful.

## 5 Can I change my name if I am 16 or 17 years old?

Yes, unless there is a court order in place that says you can't (in which case you will have to wait until you are 18) then you don't need anyone's permission. Anyone who has parental responsibility for you could ask a court to overrule it, but the court would usually allow the name change apart from in exceptional circumstances.

## 6 Can I change my name if I am not a British Citizen?

Yes, but your name change may only apply in the UK and you may have difficulties. You should check with your local Embassy in the UK to see if it will be accepted in the country you are a citizen of, and if they have any special requirements. If they won't accept it then you can still change your name for UK purposes, but because your passport and any visas will still be in your previous name you may find it difficult to get all records updated. However there is nothing to stop you from working, studying, paying taxes, renting a property or anything else in a different name from the one on your passport and visa. If you do this, ensure that you provide both names when applying for or extending your visa.

## 7 What are the best ways to change my name?

In the UK the law says that you can change your name just by starting to use a new name (subject to parental permission if you are under 16). As long as it isn't for fraudulent reasons, there is no legal requirement for any documentation whatsoever when it comes to making a change of name and you can have as many names as you want. Indeed it can be argued that any organisation demanding to see documents such as deed polls may be breaking the law, as Jane Fae explores in [this article](#).

However in practice many organisations will not update your records without seeing evidence that your name has changed and that you have abandoned your previous name. There are several ways to produce this evidence:

### 7.1 Free Deed Poll

The cheapest option is a deed poll as you can usually make your own for free, print it out and have it witnessed by almost anyone you know. There are several options for making a deed poll, including:

- using the [Free Deed Poll UK site](#) if you are at least 18 years old and a British Citizen or Commonwealth Citizen
- using the [Free UK Deed Poll site](#) if you are at least 18 years old and a British Citizen
- using [MD Pryke Notary Public template](#) if you are at least 16 years old
- using the [Easylawyers Deed Poll template](#) if you are under 16. This deed poll must be completed by someone with parental permission. Where the template uses gendered language (eg son/daughter, he/she) you should use the language that matches the new name. For a non-binary person you can change son/daughter to child and he/she to they, but we can't guarantee that everywhere will accept it. You will also need a consent letter (unless there is a court order). Examples of these can be found [here](#), but do not use the service on that website without first reading the rest of this page.

If you are using an uncommon title such as Mx then it can be useful (although not required) to include your title on your deed poll. To do this, add the following line after the line that starts "I authorise and require...":

*I FURTHER HEREBY DECLARE that I entirely renounce, relinquish and abandon the use of my said former title [OLD TITLE] and assume, adopt and determine to take and use from the date hereof the title of [NEW TITLE] in substitution for my former title of [OLD TITLE].*

You should print your deed poll on good quality paper, and you might want to make several copies. Your deed poll requires two witnesses. These can be any two people who are at least 18 years old, live in the UK, don't live at the same address as you and aren't related to you. They do not need any special qualifications or need to have any particular job. If you cannot find two witnesses then the first two sites above allow you to generate a deed poll with only one witness. Once signed and witnessed the deed poll is complete - it doesn't need to be registered anywhere and can be used as proof of name change immediately.

### 7.2 Statutory Declaration

If you would prefer a document that has been checked and signed by someone official, then a statutory declaration is the cheapest option. You can make your own statutory declaration and print it out but then you must take it to a solicitor who will witness you signing it. They are only allowed to charge between £5 and £10 for this (depending on where in the UK you are) and many will do it without an appointment. You can also have it witnessed by a notary public or magistrate, but they may charge slightly more. There are several options for creating a statutory declaration, including:

- using the [CAB Statutory Declaration generator](#) if you are 16 or over (site is designed for England, but the document generated will work anywhere in UK)
- using the [template on Scottish Trans Alliance's website](#) if you are 16 or over (suitable for use anywhere in the UK)
- using the [template on Transgender NI's website](#) if you are 16 or over (suitable for use anywhere in the UK)
- a free template for under 16s is not currently available. If you know of one please email [info@uktrans.info](mailto:info@uktrans.info)

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If you are using an uncommon title such as Mx then it can be useful (although not required) to include your title on your statutory declaration. To do this, add the following line after the line that starts "I absolutely and entirely renounce...":

*I ALSO ABSOLUTELY and entirely renounce relinquish and abandon the use of my former title of [OLD TITLE] and assume adopt and determine to take and use from the date hereof the title of [NEW TITLE] in substitution for my former title of [OLD TITLE].*

You should print your statutory declaration on good quality paper. The solicitor can make you extra copies, but will probably charge for this.

Be aware that although many solicitors are willing to create statutory declarations for you, this can be very expensive and has no benefit. If you take a free version using the links above then they can only charge a set fee of between £5 and £10.

Once signed and witnessed by the solicitor the statutory declaration is complete - it doesn't need to be registered anywhere and can be used as proof of name change immediately.

## 8 What other ways are there to change my name?

We recommend that you either make a free deed poll or statutory declaration as described above. There are also a number of other ways to change your name that we do not recommend:

### 8.1 Deed Poll Services

There are a number of organisations online (such as UK Deed Poll Service and the UK Deed Poll Office) who will prepare deed polls for you. They usually charge between £10 and £40 for this service. These organisations are not in any way official or licensed, and all they do is print you a document on fancy paper. There is absolutely no advantage to using one of these organisations as the free deed polls above are just as official and valid as anything they can provide.

### 8.2 Deed Poll Enrolled with the Royal Court of Justice

It is possible to [enrol a deed poll](#) with the Royal Court of Justice. This stores it for safe keeping, ensuring that you can always get a copy. However it does not make the deed poll any more official or valid, and no organisation should require it to be enrolled. There are several things to consider before choosing this method:

- There is a charge of £36 for enrolling the deed poll, plus solicitor's fees for completing the paperwork.
- The process takes several weeks to complete.
- Details of your name change (including your old name) will be published in [The Gazette](#), which means it will be publicly available (including online) forever.
- You will need to find someone who has known you for at least 10 years, is a British or Commonwealth Citizen, is a homeowner and isn't related to you who is willing to visit a solicitor with you to swear an oath.
- If you are married then you will need written permission from your spouse.
- If you are 16 or 17 then you need permission from everyone who has parental responsibility.
- If you are under 18 then you must prove that the name change is in your best interests.

### 8.3 Recording a Name Change on your Scottish Birth or Adoption Certificate

If your birth was registered in Scotland or you were adopted in Scotland then [you can apply](#) to have your name change recorded on your birth or adoption certificate. This will then mean that you can use your birth certificate as proof of name change. Although using this service is an option, it is not required. There are several things to consider before choosing this method:

- There is a charge of £40 for recording the name change, and then £15 for your new birth certificate.
- The process takes up to two weeks to complete.

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- Details of your name change (including your old name) will be available to anyone who sees your birth certificate, copies of which can be obtained without your consent.
- You can only record one change of forenames and one change of surname before you turn 16. You can only record one change of forenames and three changes of surname after you turn 16.
- If you are under 16 then you need permission from everyone who has parental responsibility.

### 8.4 Recording a Name Change on your Northern Irish Birth or Adoption Certificate

If your birth was registered in Northern Ireland or you were adopted in Northern Ireland then [you can apply](#) to have your name change recorded on your birth or adoption certificate.

This will then mean that you can use your birth certificate as proof of name change. Although using this service is an option, it is not required. There are several things to consider before choosing this method:

- There is a charge of £35 for recording the name change, and then £15 for your new birth certificate.
- The process takes up to two weeks to complete.
- Details of your name change (including your old name) will be available to anyone who sees your birth certificate, copies of which can be obtained without your consent.
- You can only record one change of forenames and one change of surname before you turn 18. You can only record one change of forenames and three changes of surname after you turn 18.
- If you are under 18 then you need permission from everyone who has parental responsibility.

### 8.5 Royal Licence

The Queen may at her discretion grant a licence allowing one of her subjects to change their name and there are [procedures in place](#) for this, however it only allows a change of surname and is only used in certain circumstances. Unless you have a Coat of Arms that will need changing as a result of your name change, this method isn't suitable.

### 8.6 Certificate from the Court of the Lord Lyon of Scotland

In Scotland you can [petition the Court of the Lord Lyon](#) for a certificate of your name change. It is a court of law that deals with all matters of a heraldic nature in Scotland. The process will take 4-6 months and is subject to a hefty fee. Unless you have a Coat of Arms that will need changing as a result of your name change, or you are a Clan Chief, this method isn't suitable.

### 8.7 Act of Parliament

Although it is possible to change your name with a private Act of Parliament, this is very uncommon and the last time it happened was 1907. You would need to have some exceptionally unusual and rare circumstances for this to be necessary, and it would be a very lengthy and expensive process.