



Identity checking for GP online services

What you need to know

September 2018

Introduction to identity checking

There are three approved methods for checking a patient's identity. It is likely that a practice will need to use all three, but may have a preferred method for most patients.

- Vouching
- Vouching with confirmation
- Identity documents

It is essential that before giving a patient access to their record, their identity is checked by a responsible person within the practice and that they confirm they are giving access to the correct record.

Any authorised person within the practice can check and approve, this should be specified in your patient online process and procedures document.

Vouching

Vouching gives practices flexibility by enabling patients to sign up to GP online services when they are at the practice, rather than them remembering to bring in identification at a later date.

Vouching for a patient's identity requires an authorised member of staff, who knows the patient, to verify that no deception is taking place and that the patient is who they claim to be.

The staff member must know that the person presenting is the patient

Vouching is essential for

- patients who do not have the required ID documents

Vouching is useful for

- patients who attend regularly, such as those with long term conditions (asthma, diabetes)
- GPs and nurses wanting to give access as part of the patient's ongoing care during the consultation

Vouching with confirmation

In a situation where the patient is not known well by an authorised member of staff, the patient's identity can be verified by obtaining responses to questions from information held in the medical record-

It is extremely important that the questions posed

- should take place discreetly.
- do not accidentally disclose confidential information to the patient before their identity is verified.
- include a range of questions not only based on demographic information, for example
 - *When did you last see a doctor/nurse at this surgery?*
 - *Do you take any prescribed medicines? Can you tell me what they are?*
 - *Have you had an operation in hospital? Can you remember when and what it was for?*

This is particularly useful for

- **GPs and nurses giving access as part of the patients ongoing care during the consultation.** Patients respond well to their clinician encouraging them to access and use their records in their own care.
- **Confirming a patient's identity over the phone.** Please note that this option should only be considered for patients wanting access to booking/cancelling appointments and/or ordering repeat prescriptions. It should not be used for giving a patient access to their electronic medical record.

ID documents

Most patients are able to prove their identity using documentation

Just as with DBS checks, two forms of documentation must be provided as evidence of identity and one of these must contain a photo. Acceptable documents include passport, photo driving licences and bank statements, but not utility bills.

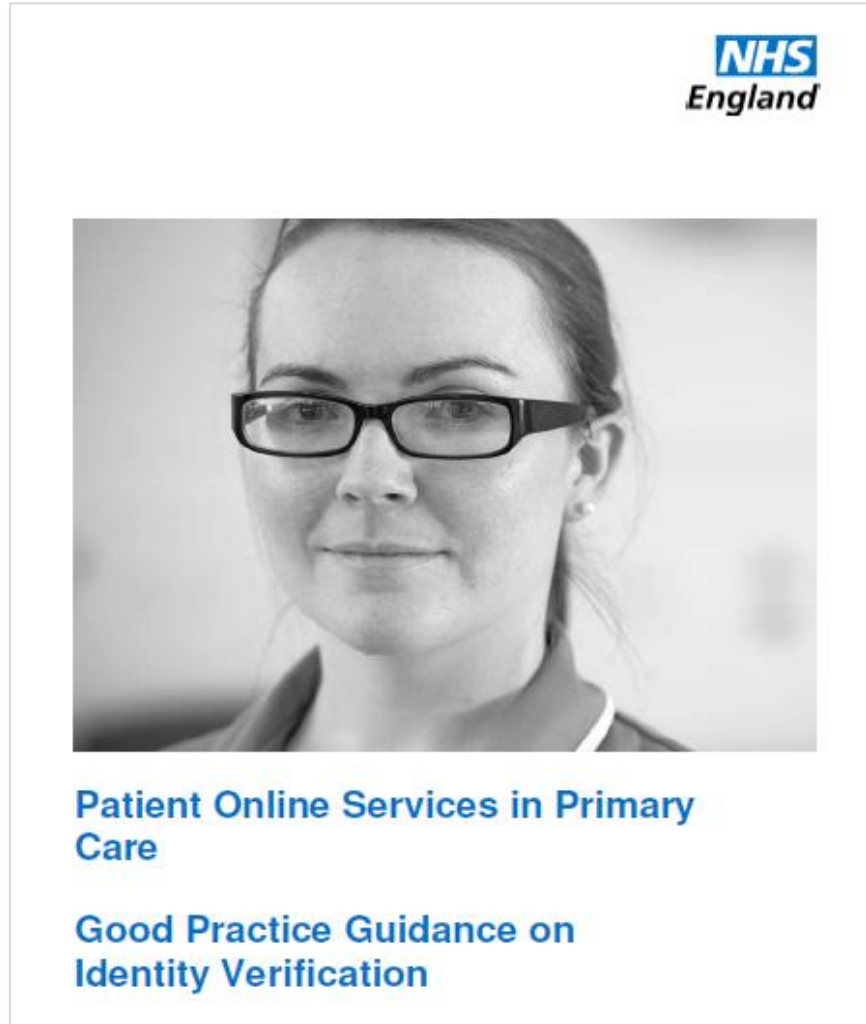
NHS England has produced **Good Practice Guidance on Identity Verification**, the full list of suitable documents is in **Appendix 3 – Acceptable identity evidence**

Click to download
Good Practice Guidance
on Identity Verification

ID documents are the most commonly used method for verifying identity. The benefits of this method are that practices will have documentary evidence that the person is who they say they are. However, it is a less flexible approach and requires patients to remember to bring their ID with them. Using this as the only method:

- prohibits patients without ID from accessing online services
- restricts GPs and nurses from giving immediate access to patients who they think will benefit
- could be a lost opportunity for registering a patient

Good Practice Guidance on Identity Verification



NHS England Information Governance Team has developed Good Practice Guidelines on Identity Verification.

This guidance complies with Cabinet Office requirements and was used and is referenced in the guidance developed by the RCGP.

Examples of what other practices are doing

The preferred method of ID checking will differ between practices, and a practice may benefit from using different methods at different times. **Practice examples:**

Practice 1

“Practice Nurses were trained to vouch when patients came for appointments, for example patients with diabetes.

They felt it was quick, worked well, and benefited the patient by being more involved in their care. The process didn't take too much time out the appointment once they had been trained.

The feedback from patients was they felt more supported and informed going forward.”

Practice 2

“Patients that don't have ID are automatically vouched for by the GP or nurse during their appointment and the signed details are presented to reception, allowing them to register for GP online services there and then.

The practice manager says this system means they can sign up patients opportunistically while they are in the surgery.

“We believe that if the patient has to make a separate journey to bring their ID in, then they generally don't do it.”

Practice 3

“Our patients are homeless and the majority are well known and can be vouched for when registering for online services without any form of identification as many just don't have any ID.

We currently give access to booking/cancelling appointments as this really helps the practice and the patients. This includes consented proxy access for support workers. We're looking at ways of extending access to order repeat prescriptions and medical records once we've worked through a few IG issues.

If a patient is not well known to us we ask them questions only they will know the answer to, such as what medication they are on, when was the last time they saw the nurse etc. - questions which vary depending on the patient's circumstances and competency levels.”

About the guidance

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has produced guidance across the remit of GP online services.

The identity verification guidance was produced in conjunction with NHS England Information Governance and complies to the Cabinet Office requirements.

During production the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), British Medical Association (BMA) and medical defence unions were consulted.

RCGP introduction

Most general practice services rely on varying levels and methods of identity verification. But access to online services demands a more consistent and robust approach to ensure patient confidentiality while providing them with secure access to personal and sensitive data.

Patients may book an initial appointment online as soon as they have completed a simple online registration process. However, a more secure identity verification process is required before full access to appointment, repeat prescription ordering or record access services may be enabled for a patient.

Every practice is required to verify patient identity documentation, or individually vouch for each patient requesting access to online services. These processes need to be simple, quick, patient-friendly and not overly demanding for the practice.

RCGP e-learning courses

About the e-learning

Courses are designed for all members of the practice team and anyone else interested in the topic. They are based on the best practice guidance and give scenarios

Each course lasts between 10-15 mins, and are suitable for use in practice meetings and training sessions.

You will need to register on the RCGP e-learning site to use the courses.

Registration is free and open to all, not just RCGP members.

Available courses

ELearning Sections

(Free registration/login required)

- Coercion
- Identity Verification
- Proxy Access
- Children & Young People
- Overview and Benefits
- Protecting Patients and Practices
- Online Access for Clinical Care

RCGP downloadable resources

Guidance

- Identity verification - guidance for general practice. Please check the RCGP website <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/>

Other guides include:

- [Identity verification - Getting ready checklist | step-by-step guide](#)
- [Identity verification - Example practice protocol:](#)
- [Example registration form](#)

[NHS England patient information leaflets](#)



RCGP PATIENT ONLINE GUIDANCE

IDENTITY VERIFICATION FOR NEW APPLICANTS

For Patient Online, identity verification is a face-to-face process that must occur at the practice when the patient's application has been accepted and they are given login credentials (usually a username and password for their account). Login credentials must not be given to the applicant or emailed to a personal address that the applicant has provided until their identity has been personally verified by an authorised member of the practice team. The credentials must not be given to anyone else.

There are three valid ways to verify the identity of the person who is asking for online access for transactional services or records access:

1. An authorised member of staff, who knows the patient well enough to verify that they are who they say they are, and that no deception

The verification process must be recorded in the patient's record including:

- identify of the member(s) of the practice team who carried out the verification process
- the method of verification used (vouching, documentary evidence of clinical questions)

Involve your Patient Participation Group (PPG)

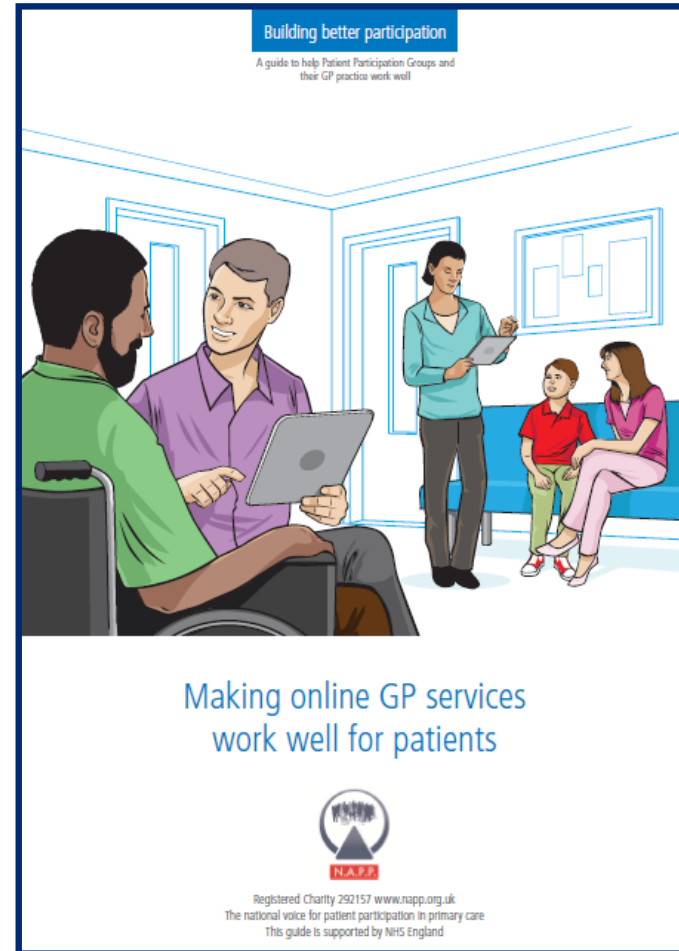
Testing the guidance

Your Patient Participation Group (PPG) is there to help the practice as an important link with its patients.

It can actively promote new programmes, like GP online services, offering patient-to-patient support and sharing members' own experiences.

Use the PPG to test the contents of this guide to make sure that what your practice is doing with identity checking is meeting the standards of best practice.

PPG Guide



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