

# Good Practice Guide Organisation Identity



NATIONAL TECHNICAL AUTHORITY  
FOR INFORMATION ASSURANCE

**CabinetOffice**



## Good Practice Guide No. 46

# Organisation Identity

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## Document History

Version	Date	Comment
1.0	October 2013	First issue
1.1	October 2015	First public release

## Purpose & Intended Readership

This document should be read by individuals in organisations that are responsible for identity proofing other organisations where any HMG department or service will be relying on the identity of that organisation. This includes those responsible for the procurement, assessment or delivery of an Identity Assurance (IdA) service.

## Executive Summary

Within the UK there is no official or statutory attribute or set of attributes that are used to uniquely identify every form of legal organisation. Some organisations are required to be registered with a public authority but by far most organisations recognised by Law are not. Under UK Law a legal organisation is a distinct legal entity

## Feedback

CESG welcomes feedback and encourage readers to inform CESG of their experiences, good or bad in this document. Please email: [enquiries@cesg.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cesg.gsi.gov.uk)

separate from its members. The members of an organisation operate and bind it, however members actions are "for and on behalf of" the organisation and not their own. Whilst an organisation can be bound by the actions of its members it can never take actions by itself, it always needs a member to act on its behalf.

This document is designed to demonstrate how identifying the individual in combination with checking that they are a responsible person acting on behalf of the organisation, can provide various levels of assurance with regard to the existence of an organisation and that the individual claiming to be acting on behalf of the organisation is someone who is authorised to act on behalf of the organisation.

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## Key Principle

- This document is intended to provide guidance on the proofing of an organisation and verification that an individual is a real person and that they are responsible and accountable for the action of that organisation

## Purpose

1. The purpose of this document is to establish the requirements for identifying an organisation and at least one individual who is accountable and responsible for actions of that organisation in the context of HMG online services.
2. In addition this document will characterise the elements of the validation and verification processes that should be carried out.
3. This Good Practice Guide (GPG) does not provide guidance on how to implement the requirements.

## Desired outcomes and aims

4. This document has a number of aims, as listed below:
  - a. To establish the requirements for identifying an organisation and at least one individual who is accountable for that organisation in the context of access to and use of HMG online services.
  - b. To provide an understanding of the capabilities needed by the proofing process to demonstrate that an individual is accountable for an organisation in the context of access to and use of HMG online services.
  - c. To provide information to independent assessment organisations so that benchmarks or profiles can be developed to support the independent assessment and certification of organisation proofing services.

## Definitions

5. The following table provides definitions for terms used within this document.

Term	Definition
Organisation Details	The legal name and address of an organisation
Responsible Officer	A person who is legally accountable for the actions of an organisation
Registered Address	The postal address and email address (where applicable) of an organisation as recorded in a register
Registration Details	Information about an organisation that is held in a Register

Term	Definition
Register	An official public record containing details about an organisation that the organisation is legally required to keep up to date and accurate
Applicant	An individual who is purporting to be a responsible officer of an Organisation
Organisation	A legal body with an existence that is separate in law from its members
IPV	Identity Proofing and Verification
Personal Name	A proper name used to identify a real person, as a minimum this contains forename and surname (also known as given name and family name); it may include titles, other/middle names and suffixes.
Personal Details	A combination of personal name, date of birth and address. (Not to be confused with Personal Data as defined by the Data Protection Act.)
Organisation Identifier	An identifier associated with an organisation that is unique within a register.

**Table 1 - Definition of terms**

## Chapter 2 - Overview

### Key Principles

- The process should enable a legitimate individual to demonstrate that they are a Responsible Officer of an Organisation in a straightforward manner whilst creating significant barriers to those who are not
- The individual shall be required to demonstrate their identity
- The individual shall be required to declare that they are a Responsible Officer of an Organisation.
- Checks shall be carried out in a manner that is sufficient to both hold an individual accountable for their actions and hold an Organisation accountable for the actions performed by the individual acting in their capacity as a Responsible Officer of that Organisation

### Background

6. Within the UK an organisation is created from self-asserted data by the organisation's owner, with little or no identity proofing of the owner. However all organisations will have one or more people that are held accountable for the actions of that organisation (known as Responsible Officers).
7. The majority of UK organisations are not registered in any statutory and publicly available register. However organisations with higher turnovers tend to be registered (e.g. limited companies, Limited Liability Partnerships (LLP) and charities). Whereas those that are not registered are likely to be small or very small organisations with a relatively low turnover (e.g. sole traders). It is noted that a registered charity can be a registered limited company at the same time.
8. Generally organisations with higher turnovers are at greater risk of being targeted by a person fraudulently claiming to be an authorised representative of the organisation in order to either disrupt the organisation's businesses or to commit fraud. There is no logical method to determine the point at which any organisation will be at a "higher risk" of being targeted.
9. Currently a limited company or a LLP in the UK must be registered with Companies House. When registering with Companies House they must provide a correspondence address by which they can be contacted (the registered address) and provide the details of all Responsible Officers (as a minimum there must be at least one if a company (Director) or two if a partnership (Partners)). The Registrar will confirm the registered address via the address registered for that organisation.
10. Whilst an organisation has a legal standing in its own right, all organisations operate through an individual (or several individuals) that have authority to make decisions and act on behalf the organisation. In order for an organisation to have an Identity it must have at least one individual who can act for and on its behalf. Therefore and importantly it is not just the assurance of the existence of the organisation itself that is being sought but also that there is an individual

(Responsible Officer) who has the authority to act for and on behalf of that organisation when interacting with HMG online services.

### The proofing process

11. The following provides an overview of the proofing process:
  - a. The identity of the applicant shall be proven in accordance with CESA Good Practice Guide 45 (GPG 45), Identity Proofing and Verification of an Individual (reference [a]).
  - b. The applicant shall declare the organisation for which they are a responsible officer. Where details of an organisation are held on a register, the applicant shall provide the registered details which must, as a minimum, contain the organisation details, the registered address and, where applicable, the organisation identifier.
  - c. Checks shall be performed to determine that the applicant is a responsible officer of the organisation.
  - d. At the end of the process a relationship has been established between the applicant and an organisation that describes the level of confidence that the applicant is a responsible officer of that organisation and, by inference, that the organisation is a legal entity.

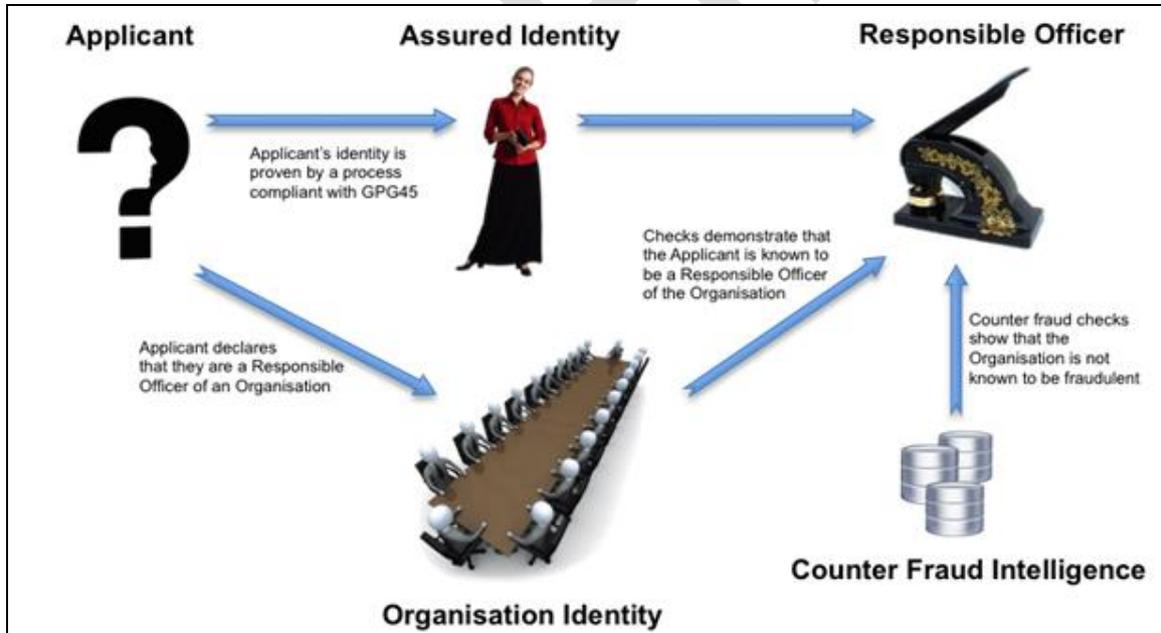


Figure 1 - Overview of proofing process

## Chapter 3 - Levels of Organisation Identity

### Key Principles

- Two levels of identity proofing are provided, each of which provide an increasing level of confidence in that claimed identity
- There is no requirement to perform proofing when considering CESG Good Practice Guide No. 43 (GPG 43), Requirements for Secure Delivery of Online Public Services, (RSDOPS), (reference [b])

### Levels of Identity Proofing

12. This guide has been written with the intention of achieving alignment to National and International standards describing levels of identity assurance, including GPG 43 (reference [b]).
13. GPG 43 specifies a number of security controls intended to support the secure delivery of an online service. At Level 0 for personal and corporate registration there is no requirement for assurance in a claimed identity. For Level 1 personal and corporate registration there is no need to disclose the real world identity of the individual or the organisation but registration using an asserted identity may be required to access the service, so no proofing of an asserted identity is carried out. If there is no need to know an individual's or an organisation's identity then it is simply not asked for. Therefore this document does not describe the requirements for a Level 0 or Level 1 organisation identity.

#### Level 2<sup>1</sup>

14. The Applicant has declared that they are a Responsible Officer for the Organisation. The level of assurance concerning the Applicant's identity and that they are a Responsible Officer for the Organisation, give sufficient confidence for it to be offered in support of civil proceedings.

#### Level 3

15. The Applicant has declared that they are a Responsible Officer for the Organisation. The level of assurance concerning the Applicant's identity and that they are a Responsible Officer for the Organisation, give sufficient confidence for it to be offered in support of criminal proceedings.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: These levels **do not** directly map to the existing levels for Corporate Registration in GPG 43. Alignment to this GPG and changes to the existing levels will be developed in future versions of GPG 43.

## Chapter 4 - Organisation Proofing and Verification (OPV) Elements

### Key Principle

- OPV elements are used to characterise and score the checks carried out against a claimed organisation identity

### Organisation Proofing and Verification (OPV) Elements

16. There are three OPV elements that are described in the following sections.

#### OPV Element A - Outcome of IPV of the Applicant's Identity

17. The purpose of this element is to record the assurance gained of the Applicant's identity. This is important as before the Applicant can be confirmed as being a Responsible Officer of an organisation there must be some certainty as to who they are.
18. The following table demonstrates the assurance of the identity required and the corresponding score for this element.

Score	Assurance of the Applicants identity
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPV of the Applicant was unsuccessful as described in GPG 45.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Applicant has been proofed to a level compliant with a Level 1 Identity as described in GPG 45.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Applicant has been proofed to a level compliant with a Level 2 Identity as described in GPG 45.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Applicant has been proofed to a level compliant with a Level 3 Identity as described in GPG 45.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Applicant has been proofed to a level compliant with a Level 4 Identity as described in GPG 45.</li> </ul>

**Table 2 - Assurance of Applicants identity**

#### OPV Element B - Outcome of Verification of the Responsible Officer

19. The purpose of this element is to record the assurance gained of the Applicant being a Responsible Officer of the organisation. The following table demonstrates the assurance required and the corresponding score for this element.

Score	Verification that the Applicant is a Responsible Officer of the Organisation
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Applicant could not be confirmed as being a Responsible Officer of the Organisation.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No assurance of the Applicant being a Responsible Officer was required.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The address of the Applicant is consistent with the declared address of the Organisation.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Personal Details of the Applicant have been confirmed as matching those of a Responsible Officer for the Organisation held in a Register.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Applicant has been confirmed by the Organisation as being a Responsible Officer.</li> </ul>

**Table 3 - Responsible Officer Verification**

**OPV Element C - Outcome of Counter-Fraud Checks**

20. The purpose of this element is to record the score obtained from the Counter-Fraud Check process. The following table demonstrates the outcomes and the corresponding score once any investigation activity has been carried out for this element.

Score	Counter-Fraud Checks
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisation is suspected of not being, or known not to be, a legal organisation.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Counter-Fraud checks were performed against the Organisation.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No confirmed evidence, using a reliable and independent source, that the Organisation is not a legal Organisation.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No confirmed evidence, using a reliable and independent source, that the Organisation is not a legal Organisation.</li> </ul> <p><b>AND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No confirmed evidence, using HMG specified source(s), that the Organisation is not a legal Organisation.</li> </ul>

**Table 4 - Counter-Fraud Checks**

## Chapter 5 - Requirements for Organisation Identity Levels

### Key Principle

- The two levels of organisation identity attract increasing requirements for the three OPV element scores as documented in Chapter 4

### Requirements

21. The following tables set out the minimum criteria for each OPV element in the various Organisation Identity Levels.

#### Requirements for Level 2 Organisation Identity

Element	Requirements
OPV-A	As a minimum the Applicant must be proofed by a process that achieves a score of 2.
OPV-B	As a minimum the Applicant must be Verified as being a Responsible Officer of the Organisation by a process that achieves a score of 2.
OPV-C	As a minimum the Organisation Identity must be subjected to a Counter-Fraud Check by a process that is able to achieve a score of 2.

**Table 5 - Requirements for OPV Level 2**

#### Requirements for Level 3 Organisation Identity

Element	Requirements
OPV-A	As a minimum the Applicant must be proofed by a process that achieves a score of 3.
OPV-B	As a minimum the Applicant must be Verified as being a Responsible Officer of the Organisation by a process that achieves a score of 3.
OPV-C	As a minimum the Organisation Identity must be subjected to a Counter-Fraud Check by a process that is able to achieve a score of 3.

**Table 6 - Requirements for OPV Level 3**

## References

- [a] CESG Good Practice Guide 45, Identity Proofing and Verification of an Individual - latest issue available at the CESG website.
- [b] CESG Good Practice Guide No. 43, Requirements for Secure Delivery of Online Public Services – latest issue available at the CESG website.

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