

The right to work check checklist: before day one, on the

Check before day one, with the person present or via the official online service; copy what you checked in a form that can't be altered; record the date; keep it for the employment plus 2 years; diary a follow-up if permission is time-limited. All figures and rules verified against gov.uk on 2 September 2026.

The checklist

Before day one - every hire, no exceptions

- Right to work confirmed before employment starts - the check protects you only for employment that began after it.
- Check run on every new hire, British and Irish citizens included - checking only people you assume need one is direct discrimination waiting to be written down.
- The person doing the check knows which of the three routes applies (below) - and that a photocopy of a share code email is not a check.

Route 1 - online check with a share code (most visa holders and eVisa status)

- Candidate provides their share code and date of birth.
- You run the code through the Home Office online checking service yourself - do not accept a screenshot the candidate took.
- The photo on the online result matches the person in front of you (in person or on a video call).
- Save the profile page result (PDF or unalterable copy) and record the date of the check.

Route 2 - manual document check (British and Irish citizens with physical documents)

- You see original documents from the Home Office acceptable list - typically a passport (current or, for British/Irish citizens, in some cases expired) or birth certificate combinations.
- Checked with the person present - physically or via live video while you hold the originals.
- Photos, dates of birth and names consistent across documents; any name difference explained by a marriage certificate or deed poll, copied too.
- Copy made that cannot be changed, clear enough to read; date of the check recorded on it.

Route 3 - digital identity check via an IDSP (British and Irish citizens with a valid passport)

- Check run through a certified identity service provider using identity document validation technology.
- You still confirm the verified identity matches the person who turns up - the IDSP verifies the document, you verify the human.
- IDSP output saved with the date, same retention as everything else.

Record and retain

- Copy or online result stored somewhere access-controlled, in a form that cannot be edited.

- Date of the check recorded - the excuse depends on when, not just whether.
- Kept for the whole employment plus 2 years after the person leaves - then deleted; identity documents held forever become a GDPR liability instead of a defence.

Follow-up checks - the part that fails silently

- If permission is time-limited, the expiry date goes in a register with a reminder ahead of it - not in the manager's memory.
- Follow-up check completed before the current permission expires, and the new result stored with its date.
- Someone owns the register. "HR will notice" is not an owner.

Why the boring parts matter

A correct check before day one gives you the statutory excuse - protection from the civil penalty of up to £60,000 per illegal worker - and knowingly employing someone without permission is a criminal matter carrying up to 5 years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine (gov.uk: checking right to work, gov.uk: penalties). The failures that actually happen in small companies are rarely wilful: the check done in week two instead of before day one, the share-code screenshot accepted at face value, and above all the missed follow-up - a visa that expired eighteen months ago while the paperwork sat in a drawer. The checklist's whole job is to make those three impossible.

Running the register so it keeps itself

The follow-up dates are where a spreadsheet quietly fails: it reminds nobody. CoDash keeps a right-to-work register with the check date, the evidence and the expiry alongside the rest of the employee record, and chases the follow-up before it lapses - the same pattern as DBS renewals and training expiry. Guidance changes over time too: re-check the gov.uk pages above whenever you hire under a new scheme, and treat this checklist as the process skeleton rather than the last word.

A free template from CoDash - codash.co.uk/templates. Edit it to match how your company actually works, and take advice on anything unusual.