

What is a Deed Poll?

A Deed Poll is a legal document. It binds the person who signs it to a particular course of action as detailed on the Deed Poll document such as a change of name. The modern term for this document is a *Deed of Change of Name*.

By executing the Deed Poll (signing, dating and having witnessed) you are committing yourself to:

- i.** Abandoning the use of your former name;
- ii.** Using your new name at all times;
- iii.** Requiring all persons to address you by your new name.

A Deed Poll therefore provides documentary evidence that you have changed your name and that you are legally binding yourself to using your new name. Although a Deed Poll is an English legal document, it is recognised by all UK government departments and UK companies and organisations - subject to the Deed Poll being prepared by a competent authority such as a Solicitor.

What is the purpose of a Deed Poll?

If you want to get all of your documents and records changed to show a new name e.g. your medical records, bank account, credit cards, passport, driving licence etc, you will be asked to produce documentary evidence of your change of name. A Deed Poll is a formal statement to prove that you have changed your name and it provides you with the necessary documentary evidence of the name by which you wish to be known.

With a Deed Poll, you can change your forenames or surname, add names, remove names or rearrange your existing names. You can change your name at any time and for any reason provided it is not to deceive or defraud or to avoid an obligation.

A Deed Poll can be executed by any British citizen aged 18 years or over living anywhere in the world or by anyone, of any nationality, living in the United Kingdom (parents can apply on behalf of their children). It should be noted that a Deed Poll is only recognised by United Kingdom government departments, companies and organisations.

Who can apply for a Deed Poll?

You can apply for a Deed Poll if you:

- are British, or
- live in the United Kingdom.

If you are British, you can be living anywhere in the world.

If you live in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland you can be of any nationality.

If you are a foreign national living in the UK, we advise you to check with your country's high commission or Embassy in London to see if a Deed Poll issued in the UK will be accepted as documentary evidence to get your passport changed to show your new name. Countries that have a legal system based on the British legal system will usually accept a Deed Poll issued in the UK. Other countries may ask you to get your deed poll 'legalised'.

Can I change my children's names?

You can easily change your child's name by Deed Poll providing those with Parental Responsibility consent to the name change. If your child is 18 or over, they must execute their own Deed Poll.

If you have sole Parental Responsibility and the father has regular contact with your child you should still obtain the father's consent to the change of name.

If a parent with or without Parental Responsibility refuses consent to the change of a child's name then a Court Order permitting the change should be obtained first.

Are there any restrictions on names?

Although there are no laws in the United Kingdom relating to unsuitable names, there are restrictions we impose on what you can change your name to.

We will not prepare a Deed Poll for a name that:

- is impossible to pronounce,
- includes numbers or symbols,
- includes punctuation marks - although you can have a hyphen to link forenames or surnames (for example, if you want a double barrelled surname) and an apostrophe in the case of surnames like O'Brien.
- we consider vulgar or offensive.
- may result in others believing you have a conferred honour or rank, for example, a change of first name to General, Colonel etc.,

Other than the above restrictions, you can change your forenames, surname (or both), add names, remove names or rearrange your existing names.

Copyright and trade marks protection of names

There is no copyright or trade mark protection for people's names. Therefore, if you want to call yourself Elton John for everyday use, you can. However, you cannot use your new name if it results in passing-off or deception. For example, if you changed your name to Elton John and you published music and/or lyrics in that name, you will probably find yourself subject to legal action by the artist Elton John.

Who to advise after changing your name

After changing your name by Deed Poll, you must notify everyone that has your personal records to let them know you have changed your name. Government departments and agencies such as the Passport Office, DVLA and Inland Revenue will need to see your original Deed Poll document (or certified copy) as will your bank, building society and credit card companies. Most other companies and organisations will accept a photocopy.

If you have changed the name of your child, you will also be required to provide the letter of consent, which we return when we send you your Deed Poll.