

Changing your name by Deed Poll

In England and Wales it is legal for a person to change their first, middle and last names whenever they choose. It is also possible to change a child's name.

The legal process of changing your name

There is no specific legal process to undergo in order to change your name. According to the law, simply becoming known by a new name is considered sufficient.

The only circumstances where it would be considered illegal to change your name would be if you were doing so in order to defraud another person or organisation. This would include changing your name in order to escape criminal liability or to avoid paying back a debt.

Though there is no legal obligation to formalise a change of name in any way, practically speaking it would be difficult to fully become known by a new name until you had ID with that name on (such as a passport or driving licence).

In order for organisations such as the DVLA, the passport office or a bank to accept a change of name on your account, you will usually need to provide them with a legal document that shows your change of name.

Using a change of name deed

A change of name deed is a simple legal document that states that you have changed your name. It is sometimes also known as a deed poll.

A solicitor can draw up a change of name deed for you and ensure it is properly witnessed. They will also be able to provide enough certified copies of the deed for you to send out to all the organisations you need to notify of your name change.

It is possible to 'enrol' your change of name deed at the Royal Courts of Justice, but this is *not* a legal requirement. This will involve an extra cost (around £70) and there are no real benefits to doing so. We do not recommend that you enrol your deed as we consider it an unnecessary additional cost.

Changing your name after marriage or civil partnership

If you have recently married or entered into a civil partnership and plan to start using your spouse's surname – or to adopt a double-barrelled name – you will not usually

require a change of name deed. Most organisations will accept a certified copy of your marriage or civil partnership certificate as proof of the name change.

However, if you choose to do something more unusual with your name, (such as amalgamating two surnames or keeping your former surname as a middle name) you likely *will* require a change of name deed in order for official bodies to accept the name change.

Changing your name after divorce or dissolution

If you decide to change your surname after a divorce or civil partnership dissolution, you may not need a change of name deed. If you have chosen to return to the surname you had before your marriage or civil partnership – or if you have decided to drop part of a double-barrelled surname – a certified copy of your decree absolute will usually be sufficient.

Again, there are situations where a change of name deed will be necessary after a divorce or dissolution. This includes if you decide to change your surname to a name other than the one you used before your marriage or civil partnership.

Changing a child's name

Changing a child's name can be done in the same way as changing an adult's name. The only difference is that if the child is under 16, everyone who holds parental responsibility for them must agree to the name change. If the child is over 16, they must agree to the name change themselves.

A deed of name change for a child therefore records two things: the change of name itself and that all parties with parental responsibility have agreed to it. A solicitor will be able to draw up a change of name deed that will clearly meet this criteria.

In cases where there is a dispute about changing a child's name, you will need to seek advice from a solicitor. It is possible for these cases to be referred to court, where a judge will rule over whether or not they believe the name change would be in the child's best interest. In these cases, any court order provided would be sufficient proof of the name change and an additional change of name deed would not be necessary.

Can you change your birth certificate with a change of name deed?

A change of name deed will enable you to prove a change of name for official documents such as your passport, driving licence and bank account. However, you will not be able to use it to change the name on your birth certificate.

This is because a birth certificate is considered a historical record of the name you were given at birth. There are only limited situations where it is possible to change the name given on a birth certificate.

These include:

- If there is a mistake on the certificate
- If a child's name has been changed before their first birthday
- If you have been granted a gender recognition certificate

How Roche Legal can help

Dealing with legal issues can be confusing and stressful. We understand this, and we're always on hand to untangle jargon and offer support.

If you need advice on any of the issues raised in this help guide, please don't hesitate to [get in touch](#). Roche Legal is an award-winning legal practice, offering practical and caring advice.

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