Information pack: Digital proof of age for alcohol sales

Jointly produced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Home Office

Purpose of this document

This document brings together key information that has previously been communicated through Government guidance and stakeholder engagement activities regarding the use of digital proof of age for alcohol sales.

It is not intended to provide legal advice or a definitive interpretation of the Mandatory Licensing Conditions. Licence and certificate holders, DVS providers and other organisations involved should satisfy themselves that they comply with all relevant legal requirements and seek independent legal advice where appropriate.

What is changing?

The Licensing Act 2003 (Mandatory Licensing Conditions) (Amendment) Order 2026 enables retailers and hospitality venues in England and Wales to accept digital proofs of age when selling or supplying alcohol, provided the statutory conditions are met and subject to any local licensing conditions.

The legislation provides an additional option rather than replacing existing forms of proof of age. Businesses will not be required to accept digital proof of age. They may continue to rely on existing physical documents if they wish. Equally, customers will be able to continue to rely on physical proofs of age, like passports and driving licences, if they want to use them.

The purpose of this legislation is to remove an existing legal barrier preventing secure digital proof of age from being used when purchasing alcohol. Physical proof-of-age documents will continue to be accepted.

What is digital proof of age?

Digital proof of age is a process through which someone's age is verified digitally, as opposed to someone using a physical form of identification (such as a driving licence) to prove their age.

Digital Verification Services (DVS) can verify someone's age digitally. A DVS is a service that enables people to prove who they are, or things about themselves such as their age, digitally.

For digital proof of age to be accepted in the context of age verification for sale or supply of alcohol, the digital proof of age must be delivered at the point of sale by a DVS appearing on the government's DVS register, subject to the detailed conditions set out in the Mandatory Licensing Conditions.

By using a registered DVS, licence and certificate holders can be assured that the service which is verifying the digital proof of age has been assessed as meeting the

requirements of the DVS trust framework. It also gives the licence or certificate holder greater confidence that the age information is reliable and that appropriate measures have been taken to establish that the person presenting the digital form of identification is the rightful owner.

Services on the DVS register are regularly and independently audited as part of certification against the UK digital verification services trust framework, which are rules published by government which services must follow if they wish to become certified and apply to appear on the DVS register.

Key requirements in the legislation

The amended Mandatory Licensing Conditions contain a number of requirements relating to the acceptance of digital proof of age.

These include:

- There must be an agreement between the licence or certificate holder and the registered DVS for the provision of digital verification service, and that agreement must specify that:
    - That DVS will confirm whether or not the person being asked to prove their age has reached the required minimum age for being sold or supplied with alcohol.
    - any digital form of identification provided has been verified by a registered DVS to at least a medium level of confidence.

Relevant parties should refer to the legislation and statutory guidance for the full requirements.

The Government sets the legal requirements but does not prescribe a particular technical architecture, commercial structure or operational model.

How can I find a registered DVS?

The government maintains the statutory DVS register, which is publicly available on GOV.UK. You can access the DVS register here: Find registered digital verification services - GOV.UK.

What is not changing?

Businesses remain responsible for complying with the Licensing Act 2003, including preventing sales to under-18s, proxy sales and sales to people who are intoxicated. Those duties will not change.

Challenge 25 is still in place and the Home Office encourages its use as an additional safeguard to ensure alcohol is not sold to those under 18. The change made to the Mandatory Licensing Conditions means that where proof of age is requested, a digital proof of age can be used as an alternative to a physical proof-of-age document where a licensed premises chooses to accept this.

Frequently asked questions

Does this replace Challenge 25?

No. Challenge 25 helps businesses decide when to request proof of age. Digital proof of age is an additional way for a customer to provide that proof, alongside existing physical proof-of-age documents.

Can facial age estimation technology be used?

Age estimation technology is not a digital proof of age, and DVS cannot be certified against the UK DVS trust framework in respect of such technology. Only registered DVS may be used for digital age checks under the mandatory licensing conditions. Age estimation technology therefore cannot be used to verify an individual meets the required age for purchasing or being supplied with alcohol.

While the Licensing Act 2003 more widely does not prohibit the use of facial age estimation technology, it is for individual retailers to determine whether and how it may support their wider compliance arrangements. Retailers remain responsible for satisfying themselves that they are meeting all relevant regulatory obligations, including preventing the sale or supply of alcohol to children.

Can someone over 25 use a digital proof of age?

Yes. Digital proof of age may be used by adults of any age. The amended Mandatory Licensing Conditions do not limit its use to people who appear to be under 18 or who have been asked for ID as part of a Challenge 25 policy.

Can screenshots or photos of documents be used?

No. Inspection of a visual image alone is not sufficient. Digital proofs of age must be delivered by a registered DVS. By using a registered DVS, licence and certificate holders can be assured that the service which is verifying the digital proof of age has been assessed as meeting the requirements of the DVS trust framework. The DVS trust framework includes rules relating to security, fraud controls and information management.

Can digital proof of age be used at self-service checkouts?

Yes. Premises can choose to accept digital proofs of age at self-service checkouts provided the Mandatory Licensing Conditions are met, however, licence and certificate holders must continue to ensure they meet their wider legal responsibilities, including preventing proxy purchases and refusing sale to people who are intoxicated.

How should businesses implement digital proof of age?

The Government sets the legal framework but does not prescribe how licence or certificate holders implement proof-of-age checks through their operational

processes. Licence and certificate holders may decide whether and how they accept digital proofs of age, provided they comply with the Mandatory Licensing Conditions.

Will businesses need to accept every digital verification service?

No. Businesses may decide which services they wish to use, provided they comply with the statutory requirements.

What information will businesses receive during a check?

In most circumstances, the responsible person only needs confirmation that the customer meets the age required under the premises' age verification policy and is the person to whom the proof of age relates. Licence and certificate holders and DVS must comply with applicable data protection legislation, including the data minimisation principle, and should only process personal data that is necessary for the purpose of age verification checks in this context.

Do businesses need to assess a provider's technology themselves?

Services on the DVS register are regularly and independently audited as part of certification against the UK digital verification services trust framework, which are rules published by government which services must follow if they wish to become certified and apply to appear on the DVS register. The certification and registration process is intended to provide assurance that a service has been assessed as meeting the requirements of the trust framework.

However, while appearing on the DVS register means that a service has been assessed as meeting the requirements of the DVS trust framework, licence and certificate holders should satisfy themselves that any DVS they choose to work with meets their business needs and supports them in meeting the requirements of the mandatory licensing conditions.

Will businesses need agreements with every provider whose proof of age may be presented?

The legislation does not require the licensed premises to have separate agreements with every provider whose proof of age might be presented by a customer.

Instead, the licensed premises must be covered by an agreement, meeting the requirements under the Mandatory Licensing Conditions, with the registered DVS provider who delivers digital verification services for the purpose of compliance with the licensed premises age verification policy.

Is the Government creating a national digital identity card or tracking alcohol purchases?

No. These changes are separate from proposals for a national Digital Identity programme. The Order does not create any form of digital identity, require anyone to obtain a digital identity, or enable the Government to track alcohol purchases.

Further information

Further information is available in:

- The section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003; and
- The Government's Digital Verification Services Register

Licence and certificate holders, DVS providers and other organisations involved should satisfy themselves that they comply with all relevant legal requirements and obtain independent legal advice where appropriate.