

# The Era Of Digital Compliance

**Currently, the UK has one of the slowest and most convoluted recruitment processes globally due to outdated procedures and legislation surrounding recruitment and pre-employment checks. The recruitment operations need to speed up, without compromising safety - utilising digital platforms, and other technologies is crucial to achieve this.**

The Covid-19 pandemic further highlighted these lengthy processes. In the face of adversity, the government quickly adapted its legislation and opened the door to the beginning of the digital era of recruitment compliance for the UK. However, though some processes did develop, the temporary measures have not gone far enough, and more enhancements are needed.

In the post-pandemic world, businesses are capitalising on remote working and are reaping the benefits. Employers can expand their candidate pool and, for many, the need for face-to-face meetings have reduced considerably.

The UK government needs to better accommodate the requirements from businesses that are allowing employees to work remotely. This means that recruitment processes and pre-employment checks must align with this hybrid model, through digital platforms and new technology.

## The Shift From Manual Verification To Digital

With social distancing measures firmly implemented, 2020 saw a shift from manual verification of ID documents to digital remote checking for companies. Being able to confirm this documentation via a live video link to establish things such as a candidates' Right to Work (RTW) eligibility or identity meant that recruiters, employers, and candidates alike saved a great amount of time. This also meant that candidates were able to stay at home without the need to travel, providing an overall easier and smoother process for document verification.

This was followed by the evolution of Identity Service Providers (IDSP), a technology that allows documents such as passports, ID cards and driving licences to be verified digitally. Some of these IDSPs have facial recognition technology built into them which compares a live selfie

against the image on their ID document to check for facial similarity. The IDSPs can also check documentation codes, such as passport chips, automatically with Home Office records, to find out whether the information is legitimate and a record is taken of discrepancies or attempts to 'trick the system'.

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In October 2022, the government updated its RTW legislation following the temporary adjustments that had been in place for the previous two years. This meant that everyone had to use an IDSP to complete a Digital RTW check, or organise for manual verification of documents and candidates to take place.

The use of IDSP technology offloads the risk of human error when it comes to

verifying documentation. Although the information that a recruiter, or compliance team is given may be genuine, sometimes the person presenting is different. Therefore, the use of AI technology means that, not only can it confirm the physical presence of the person and the authenticity of the document, but it can also conduct a comparison which confirms that the identity and documentation is legitimate.

As well as accuracy being enhanced through digital RTW checks, there is also the matter of time. During a committee meeting about the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill, Keith Rosser, Director of Reed Screening and Chair of the Better Hiring Institute, called for a modernisation of the hiring process.

Rosser stated that 'in a recent study of 70,000 hires, or people going through a hiring process, 83% - some 58,000 - opted to take the digital identity route. They did it in an average time of three minutes and 30 seconds', clearly emphasising the benefits to candidates.

Time, speed and accuracy are paramount in the world of recruitment. The markets are the most competitive they have been, and candidates are sought after, therefore we need to be offering an efficient, fast, and safe recruitment process, which digital identity processes offer.

## Legislative limitations

Despite the digital RTW checks being given the green light from the UK Home Office, the legislation can still go further, and there are some limitations with the current abilities of the technology and the legislation that surrounds its use.

Unfortunately, the legislation neglects a large proportion of the workforce. In its current standing, only in-date British and Irish Passports and Irish ID cards can be used for digital RTW checks. For many, the economic burden of holding an in-date document is too large, meaning that alternative RTW documents must be verified manually.

This runs the risk of alienating the worker from applying for remote jobs further afield, as they may fear their documents cannot be checked digitally. This is a process that requires some reflection in order to become fairer, more inclusive, and accessible for everyone.

## Looking Towards The Future

In May 2023, the government launched a specific All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), focused on Modernising

Employment (MODE) and hiring. The APPG is centred around three important things: the future nature of jobs, digital hiring, and improving labour market standards for all - a huge step in the right direction for the UK recruitment market.

There are talks within the APPG MODE of linking digital platforms together to enable faster and more accurate recruitment. This could include linking HMRC databases to digital verification processes, enabling recruiters to refer to that instead of CVs and references, that can offer limited information from companies due to the increased GDPR laws on data protection.

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Hopefully, this will evolve and lead to the DBS allowing digital documents to be verified rather than physical documents, with all DBS certificates being sent in digital format.

These steps by the DBS will work to further speed up their overall services and in turn the recruitment processes for companies like us.

**Embracing The Future**

To say that a digital onboarding process would not be beneficial to a business is an outdated approach to the evolution of the UK recruitment industry. Without businesses capitalising on these platforms and ways of working, they will not be able to offer a competitive edge for attracting talent. By failing to keep up with the digital evolution, companies run the risk of offering a slower onboarding process which candidates will respond negatively to.

For the digital platforms to be successful however, there is extensive amounts of work and amendments needed by the UK government to create policies that not only allow for the use of them, but also offer stringent frameworks for providers and systems, ensuring that they are compliant with not only the policies themselves, but Employment Law and GDPR.

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It is now time for the policies and legislation to go further, and for the government and governing bodies to strengthen their policies and processes to make them not only accessible for

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everyone in the UK, but to also enhance our employment market globally to make us one of the most attractive and leading countries for recruitment.

In addition, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) launched its five year business and strategy plan in 2020, a strategy that has evolved over the last year and adapted to align with the 'post COVID era, embedding the hybrid-by-default working approach'. The DBS has focused on enhancing its technology which allowed for fast-track barring applications, and allowed ID documents to be verified via a live video link over the last three years to improve their processes and services.

The new focus for 2023-2025, is to continue automating and reducing manual steps of processes, thus speeding up their services and allowing more focus on improving the accessibility of their services.



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