

Home Office tells man, 101, his parents must confirm ID

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

The following terms for UK agencies appear in the text. What are the equivalent agencies called in your country?

1. the Home Office – the government department responsible for domestic affairs, that is immigration, security and law and order
2. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) – the government agency responsible for collecting taxes

2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

hassle
glitch

humiliation
corroborate

referendum
inconvenience

volunteer
centenarian

bug
skip

1. A _____ is a small and sudden problem, especially with technology.
2. A _____ is someone who is not paid for the work that they do.
3. If you _____ something, you do not do it but you do the next thing instead.
4. If people _____ something, they support what someone says by giving information or evidence that agrees with them.
5. A _____ is something that makes you feel very embarrassed and ashamed.
6. A _____ is a minor fault in a computer system or in a computing program.
7. A _____ is a situation that causes you problems or annoys you very much.
8. A _____ is an occasion when everyone in a country can vote to make a decision about one particular subject.
9. An _____ is an annoying problem or situation, especially one that forces you to make an extra effort to do something.
10. A _____ is someone who is 100 years old or older.

3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. How long has Giovanni Palmiero been in the UK?
2. When did the UK join the European Common Market?
3. How long has Palmiero been married?
4. How old was he when he stopped working?
5. When was Palmiero born?
6. How many grandchildren does he have?

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Request caused by apparent tech glitch came when Italian Giovanni Palmiero applied to stay in UK post-Brexit

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- 1 A 101-year-old Italian man who has been in London since 1966 was asked to get his parents to confirm his identity by the Home Office after he applied to stay in the country post-Brexit. In what appears to be a computer glitch, the Home Office thought he was a one-year-old child.
- 2 Giovanni Palmiero was told that he needed the presence of his mother and father when he made his application for the EU settlement scheme at an advice centre in Islington, north London. When the volunteer who helped Palmiero, a great-grandfather, scanned his passport into the EU settled-status app to share the biometric data with the Home Office, the system misinterpreted his birth year as 2019 instead of 1919.
- 3 "I immediately noticed that something was wrong because when I scanned in his passport, it imported his biometric data not as 1919 but as 2019. It then skipped the facial-recognition section, which is what it does with under-12s," said Dimitri Scarlato, an activist with the campaign group the3million, who also works for INCA CGIL, an organization that helps those of Italian descent.
- 4 He was then asked whether he wanted to put in the residence details of Palmiero's parents or proceed independently of them. "I was surprised. I phoned the Home Office, and it took two calls and half an hour for them to understand it was the app's fault not mine," Scarlato said. The Home Office then accepted the mistake and took Palmiero's identity details over the phone. He was then told he could resume his application as a 101-year-old. He was then asked to provide proof of residence for five years in the country, even though he has been in the UK for 54 years and the Home Office is supposed to be able to access national insurance and tax records to corroborate five years of continuous tax residency.
- 5 Palmiero came to the UK in 1966 and "worked at a restaurant in Piccadilly and, up until the age of 94, in a fish and chip shop, until 11 o'clock at night". He has been married to his 92-year-old wife, Lucia, for 75 years, and they have raised four children and have eight grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. His son Assuntino said: "It's like a humiliation. You've been here so long, and then all of a sudden, this happens. I am not worried about him because he has got us, but it's completely unfair on old people."
- 6 While the mistake seemed like a small computer bug, it was not a small mistake because the computer system "only recognized the last two digits of his year of birth," Assuntino continued. "It is more of a hassle than anything else. He is not going to be chucked out, but people of his age should not have to go through this process. They should just get it automatically. They should have a system for people who were here before 1973 and just post the documents out. They say you have to prove you have been here that long, but come on, they have HMRC records, council tax records. My parents are being sent their pensions, so how come they can't find him on the system? If they wanted to check, they could easily."
- 7 A Europhile, Palmiero was pleased when the UK entered the Common Market in 1973 but surprised by the result of the 2016 referendum. "He always hoped that the UK would enter the Common Market, and we were very surprised by Brexit," his son said. "We have been assured by the consulate that we can always stay – he can't return to Italy now as he has children and grandchildren here."
- 8 Scarlato told the online newspaper *Londra Italia* the family had subsequently received an apology "for the inconvenience" from the Home Office. But they were still waiting for Palmiero's settled status to be approved, according to Italian media reports. The Home Office said it had been in touch with the centenarian and his application was being processed. "When Mr Palmiero's case was raised, our dedicated EU settlement scheme team contacted him and those supporting him to assist with his application," it said. It added that other applicants aged 100 or over have had successful settled status applications and 2.7 million people have been granted status since the scheme opened in March, 2019.

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4 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

1. Why was Giovanni Palmiero asked to get his parents to confirm his identity?
 - a. because all EU applicants who want to stay in the UK need their parents to confirm their identity
 - b. because he did not look like the photograph in his passport
 - c. because the Home Office computer system only recognized the last two digits of his year of birth
2. Why didn't the Home Office computer system detect Palmiero's age in its face-recognition section?
 - a. because he uploaded the wrong photograph
 - b. because it does not ask for facial images of people under 12 years of age
 - c. because he had forgotten to include a photograph when he first registered on its website
3. What has happened since the computer error?
 - a. Giovanni Palmiero has returned to Italy.
 - b. The Home Office settlement-scheme team have contacted him and will help him with his application.
 - c. The computer system has been changed to recognize all four digits in the year of birth.
4. Why does Mr Palmiero want to stay in England?
 - a. because he has children and grandchildren there
 - b. because he receives a state pension from the UK government
 - c. because Italy would not accept him back

5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. a two-word noun phrase meaning *confirmation of a person's right to stay in a foreign country* (para 2)
2. an adjective meaning *relating to the recording of things such as a person's fingerprints or the appearance of their eye in order to identify them on an electronic system* (para 2)
3. a verb meaning *understand something incorrectly* (para 2)
4. a noun meaning *the origin of your parents or other older members of your family* (para 3)
5. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *force someone to leave a place* (para 6)
6. a two-word phrasal verb used in the imperative to tell someone you do not believe what they are saying (para 6)
7. an adverb meaning *after something else happened* (para 8)
8. an adjective meaning *made or used for just one purpose* (para 8)

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6 Verb + noun collocations

Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns or noun phrases in the right-hand column. Note that some verbs may go with more than one noun or noun phrase, but there is only one solution for all six.

- | | |
|------------|-------------------|
| 1. confirm | a. an application |
| 2. import | b. children |
| 3. make | c. an apology |
| 4. provide | d. your identity |
| 5. raise | e. proof |
| 6. receive | f. biometric data |

7 Word-building

Fill the gaps in the sentences using the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

- Mr Palmiero was making an application for the _____ scheme when the mistake happened. [SETTLE]
- People of his age should get settled status _____. [AUTOMATIC]
- Tax records should have corroborated five years of tax _____. [RESIDE]
- The Home Office apologized for any _____ the mistake had caused. [CONVENIENT]
- A number of other _____ over 100 years old have applied successfully for settled status. [APPLY]
- Dimitri Scarlato is an _____ with a campaign group. [ACTIVE]

8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- Computer databases only work *against* people and never *for* them.
- Bureaucrats follow the rules blindly and are never kind or helpful.
- People have become too dependent on computer systems.

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KEY

Teacher's note: In many other countries, the Home Office is called the *Interior Ministry*. In the UK, the Cabinet minister responsible for this department is the Home Secretary.

2 Key words

1. glitch
2. volunteer
3. skip
4. corroborate
5. humiliation
6. bug
7. hassle
8. referendum
9. inconvenience
10. centenarian

3 Find the information

1. 54 years
2. 1973
3. 75 years
4. 94
5. 1919
6. eight

4 Comprehension check

1. c
2. b
3. b
4. a

5 Find the word

1. settled status
2. biometric
3. misinterpret
4. descent
5. chuck out
6. come on
7. subsequently
8. dedicated

6 Verb + noun collocations

1. d
2. f
3. a
4. e
5. b
6. c

7 Word-building

1. settlement
2. automatically
3. residency
4. inconvenience
5. applicants
6. activist