

# Guideline



Best Practice Guidelines  
for Business Users of  
Cheques

**Personalising Company  
Cheques**

October 2017

# Introduction

## About our series of Best Practice Guidelines

This is one of three Guidelines for business users of cheques. This one is aimed at all businesses, including schools and public bodies, who use their own computer software rather than an accredited cheque printer to personalise their cheques. It contains advice to help protect business cheques from fraud and to minimise processing difficulties in the automated cheque clearing system.

## What is a personalised cheque?

A personalised cheque refers to a cheque produced specifically by a business for its own use – with the cheque skeleton and other personalisation details such as bank name, branch details, sort code and account details overprinted on the security background of base stock paper which must be supplied by an accredited cheque printer. It can also include the printing of the Magnetic Ink Character Recognition (MICR) code line.

## What is an accredited cheque printer?

The banking industry requires that all cheque base stock paper is printed by members of its Cheque Printer Accreditation Scheme (CPAS). The Scheme was introduced in 1995 with the aim of tackling fraud involving cheques and the rules require that CPAS members adopt stringent security standards. A full list of CPAS accredited cheque printers can be obtained from the cheque printers section on our website [www.chequeandcredit.co.uk](http://www.chequeandcredit.co.uk)

## Best Practice Advice

- 1. Bank Authorisation:** Any business wishing to personalise its own cheques must first seek authorisation from the bank where the account is held. The business must satisfy the bank(s) that it is aware of the requirements of C&CCC Standard 3.1 - Automated Processing of Vouchers (Debits) and can offer the required level of quality and security controls. Standard 3.1 can be purchased from [www.chequeandcredit.co.uk](http://www.chequeandcredit.co.uk)
- 2. Purchase of Base Stock Cheque Paper from a CPAS Member:** Base stock is special cheque paper on which the coloured security background has already been printed. All GB cheques must be printed on base stock. A business wishing to use a laser printer to personalise its own cheques must obtain a supply of base stock that is printed on laser grade CBS1 paper. The amount of information already printed on the base stock can vary.

The coloured security background will always be printed, as well as the company's name and logo (if applicable) at the top of the cheque. Also, it is preferable for the £ sign (or euro symbol) to be pre-printed by the supplier of the base stock.

Base stock can only be purchased from a CPAS member, whose name and accreditation number must appear on each cheque. Base stock cheques will be pre-printed with sequential numbers (usually on the reverse) to assist with stock control; these numbers are not the serial numbers of the cheques. A current list of CPAS members can be obtained from the cheque printers section on our website [www.chequeandcredit.co.uk](http://www.chequeandcredit.co.uk)

Please also refer to the C&CCC *Best Practice Guidelines for Using Company Cheques Safely*.

### **3. Printing Equipment:**

If you plan to print the skeleton of the cheque, the personalisation data and the MICR code line using a laser printer, you should check with your bank that the printer is a Smithers Pira approved Grade 1 printer, and approved by C&CCC for printing code lines. You must always use the black toner listed with the printer. The Smithers Pira list can be downloaded from [www.chequeandcredit.co.uk](http://www.chequeandcredit.co.uk).

### **4. Security and Quality Control Standards:**

You will need proper management controls in place for the production of cheques, preferably using a separate security area. Your staff will also have to familiarise themselves with key aspects of C&CCC Standard 3 which can be purchased from [www.chequeandcredit.co.uk](http://www.chequeandcredit.co.uk).

Blank base stock cheque paper is valuable and, in the wrong hands, could be used for fraudulent purposes. You must, therefore, establish the necessary security and audit procedures to ensure that base stock is stored and controlled. Your bank may also wish to reserve the right for their inspectors to visit your premises.

### **5. MICR Code Line Testing Using a Positioning Gauge:**

To avoid problems in the automated cheque clearing, you must ensure that the quality of code line printing is maintained. To achieve this you will need to undertake regular checks on the quality of the code line characters, and also on the position of the code line by using a positioning gauge. Gauges can be obtained via the [cpashelpdesk@chequeandcredit.co.uk](mailto:cpashelpdesk@chequeandcredit.co.uk)

## Where can I get more advice?

Before deciding to personalise your own cheques and to make sure you understand the implications of your decision contact the Relationship Manager at your bank, and the banking industry help desk on [cpashelpdesk@chequeandcredit.co.uk](mailto:cpashelpdesk@chequeandcredit.co.uk).

Please also refer to the C&CCC Best Practice Guidelines for Using Company Cheques Safely.

## About the Cheque and Credit Clearing Company

The Cheque and Credit Clearing Company manages the cheque clearing system in Great Britain – it also covers bankers' drafts, building society cheques, postal orders, warrants and government payable orders. The list of Cheque and Credit Clearing System members can be found on our website [www.chequeandcredit.co.uk](http://www.chequeandcredit.co.uk). We also manage the systems for clearing paper bank giro credits and euro cheques. Our main objective is to ensure the integrity and efficiency of the cheque clearing system for cheque users is maintained. We also manage CPAS.

## Further Information

In addition, we recommend you use the other Guidelines in our series:

- *Best Practice Guidelines for Using Laser Printers to Infill Company Cheques*
- *Best Practice Guidelines for Using Company Cheques Safely*

All the Guidelines are available from your bank or can be downloaded from [www.chequeandcredit.co.uk](http://www.chequeandcredit.co.uk)

For further information please contact your bank or C&CCC:

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