



Home Office

Tiered Application Service: the service levels we provide

Version 21.0

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about the Tiered Application Service and the different service levels we offer.

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About: Tiered Application Service: the service levels we provide

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport operational staff about TAS (Tiered Application Service). We use TAS to describe the different service levels we provide, including:

- what the different service levels are
- who can apply for what service level
- upgrading Standard applications to another service level. (Not usually available; see Upgrades: how to deal with passport service upgrades to check if the upgrade service is currently available)
- when to downgrade an application service level
- TAS exceptions

If you have issues with TAS that this guidance does not answer, you must contact the counter service line manager.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email HM Passport Office's Guidance team.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance team.

Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **21.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **11 March 2025**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated with minor formatting changes and to make it clearer the Upgrade Service is not always available to customers.

Related content

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Tiered Application Service

This section tells HM Passport operational staff about our Tiered Application Service and the different service levels we offer our customers.

We encourage customers to apply for their passport early, so we have enough time to complete nationality, identity and entitlement checks.

The Tiered Application Service (TAS) is the collective name for the passport service levels we provide (for example, Standard, Fast Track and Premium). Some of these service levels include guarantees, where we will agree to complete the customer's application within a set time limit or refund the service level element of the fee.

TAS allows customers to:

- use different application channels, (for example, applying online or by post, instead of visiting a passport office public counter)
- apply for their passport urgently
- upgrade their Standard service application to another service level (upgrading applications is not usually available; see Upgrades: how to deal with passport service upgrades to check if the upgrade service is currently available)
- apply quickly if they have urgent government business or compassionate reasons
- upgrade their application using the expedited service in exceptional circumstances, to deal with service delay upgrades

Our public counters are not open for drop-in appointments.

If a customer visits a public counter to apply for a passport because they want a quicker service, you (the counter examiner) must tell them to apply using any of the application routes available to them (for example, Digital Fast Track or Premium service).

Where we provide TAS

TAS covers all the services we provide, which are:

- [a Standard service](#) at 6 of our application processing centres (APC) in:
 - Durham
 - Glasgow
 - Belfast
 - Liverpool
 - Peterborough
 - Newport

- upgrading applications to another service level (upgrading applications is not usually available; see Upgrades: how to deal with passport service upgrades to check if the upgrade service is currently available)
- Fast Track and Premium services at our counter offices in the 6 APCs and in our London customer service centre (CSC)
- an urgent government business and compassionate travel service at all APC and CSC sites
- an expedited service in exceptional cases to deal with service delay upgrades

We will decide where work is dealt with and may move applications to different APCs to maintain our service levels.

All APCs and CSC sites must adopt a consistent approach so customers can expect the same level of service, no matter which office is dealing with their application.

TAS fees

You must follow fees guidance, for details on the fees we charge for the different TAS service levels. Customers who are eligible for a concessionary passport, must still pay the TAS element of the fee.

Standard service in the United Kingdom

The Standard service is a non-guaranteed service, including Post Office Check & Send service, available at all our APCs. It is for customers who do not need their passport urgently. Customers can apply online or with a paper application form. We do not offer the Standard service at our public counters.

See [Standard service timescales](#) for information on our target processing times.

Standard overseas service

Customers applying from overseas cannot apply for a guaranteed service, as they are only available to UK customers.

Overseas customers can apply for the standard service by:

- post
- online
- through our Local service offices

We will only accept Premium or Fast Track applications from overseas customers if they:

- were in the UK when they applied
- can provide us with a UK address so we can deliver their passport and return their documents

We cannot upgrade overseas applications. If an overseas customer needs a passport urgently they must contact the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. Our published turnaround targets for [overseas applications are published on GOV.UK](#).

TAS and child safeguarding

Applications for children can only be made through the Digital Fast Track or Standard service.

To safeguard (protect) children HM Passport Office will not offer a faster service for passport applications for children, until the application has been with us for 5 working days or more (working days are defined as Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays).

We have a legal duty to safeguard children, and the timing of an application and when the passport is available can be crucial factors that affect child abduction. We set our safeguarding period at 5 working days to allow parents (or other parties involved in a child's welfare) to obtain court orders or arrange for HM Passport Office to put a caveat in place.

The 5 days begin when we receive the customer's application:

- through Digital Customer Services (DCS) for online applications
- physically in the DHU (Document Handling Unit) for paper applications

Both events are recorded as 'Application received' on the DAP (Digital Application Processing) timeline.

On DAP, all standard and Digital Fast Track applications have an automatic safeguarding period of 5 days. If the application is completed on DAP within 5 days, DAP will automatically hold the application until the 5 day period expires. DAP will then run final automatic checks and if these are clear, send the passport to print. If the checks create a task (for example, a watchlist match) the application will be returned to the national queue or Counter Fraud team.

TAS upgrades

TAS upgrades are not available as standard, see Upgrades: how to deal with passport service upgrades to check if the service is available for customers.

Where the upgrade service is available it is only open to customers who have already submitted a Standard service application and need a faster service. Upgrades are a:

- 48-hour service (if the customer is upgrading their Standard application to the Premium service)

- 7 day service (if the customer is upgrading their Standard application to the Fast Track service)

We only upgrade Fast Track applications to the Premium service in exceptional circumstances when:

- an upgrade service is available; and,
- the office has availability to deal with the application.

Fast Track counter service

The [Fast Track](#) service is a guaranteed 7-day service (for [straightforward applications](#) and where there are [no concerns preventing issue](#)). However, if we receive a customer's application after our [cut-off time](#), it will be a guaranteed 8-day service. This service is only available by appointment at an APC.

Customers may apply for [Fast Track Collect](#) and get their passport from an APC. The cut off times also apply to Fast Track collect applications. There is an additional fee for the Fast Track Collect service.

Premium counter service

The [Premium service](#) is a guaranteed 4-hour service (if we receive the application before our [cut-off time](#)). Customers must apply using a digital application. This is only available by appointment at an APC.

If a customer's appointment is after the cut-off time, their passport will be ready to collect up to 4 working hours the next working day (if it meets standard checks).

You must follow Premium Service: how the customer applies, if you need information about how a customer books an appointment and what happens if they want to change it.

Customers needing advice at a counter office

Customers may visit a counter office without an appointment (for example, they want advice on getting a passport). This goes against the Consular Fees order, which explains how passport fees cover the cost of administering a passport application. Part of this is determining the customer's eligibility.

Visiting the counter for advice, instead of making an appointment:

- has a negative effect on Tiered Application Service (TAS) turnaround times
- gives an unfair service to customers applying by post

If a customer arrives at the counter but does not intend to apply for a passport (for example, they do not have a completed application or correct documents), you must not give advice. You must:

- tell them to call the customer adviceline
- tell them they can make an application, or find further information on GOV.UK
- give them a passport application pack

Booking a TAS counter appointment (Digital Fast Track or Premium service)

Customers can book appointments online for Digital Fast Track and Premium service, and re-book online or through our Contact Centres.

The booking element of a counter application fee is non-refundable if a customer does not attend a booked appointment or cancels it within 48 hours of the appointment time (see [The Passport \(Fees\) Regulations 2022](#)).

We cannot change appointments if it is less than 48 hours away. For more information on appointments, see Digital Customer Service: how a customer applies.

If a customer attends an appointment without the documents we need, the counter receptionist or examiner can re-book an appointment.

Last appointment times

The cut off times for our public counter appointments depend on the application type the customer is applying for.

Digital Fast Track and Premium service appointments are managed on Qmatic by the Counter managers.

The table below shows the last appointment each day, to allow the passport to be available for collection (Premium service or Digital Fast Track collect) or posted to the customer's home address within 7 days (Digital Fast Track):

Office	Digital Fast Track	Premium service
Belfast	12:30 weekdays 11:00 Saturday	16:30 weekdays 14:30 Saturday
Durham	12:30 weekdays 11:00 Saturday	16:30 weekdays 14:30 Saturday
Glasgow	12:30 weekdays 10:30 Saturday	16:00 weekdays 14:00 Saturday
Liverpool	13:30 weekdays 11:00 Saturday	17:00 weekdays 14:30 Saturday
London	12:30 weekdays 11:00 Saturday	16:30 weekdays 15:15 Saturday
Newport	12:30 weekdays 10:30 Saturday	16:00 weekdays Not available
Peterborough	12:30 weekdays 11:00 Saturday	16:30 weekdays 14:30 Saturday

If we need to suspend TAS

In special cases, we may need to suspend TAS due to factors outside our control (for example, because of power failures or offices that need to close). This may affect customers who applied for a guaranteed service.

Each APC has a workflow interruption plan to deal with these issues. Where the issue affects a public counter, the counter manager will consider the problem and take the decision to suspend services.

If we suspend services, we must tell our customers and explain that we may not be able to meet their guaranteed service. We also refund the difference in fee from a standard to the fee paid, for example if the customer paid a Premium fee.

This applies to customers:

- attending an appointment
- waiting to collect a passport

If there is a national issue affecting all HM Passport Office sites, the service manager will take the lead and:

- update stakeholders
- make sure each APC takes a consistent approach across all sites (for example, by following [crisis guidance](#) or the [expedited service guidance](#))

The counter manager will tell the counter service line manager of any reduction in service so they can deal with the impact.

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Who can apply for the different TAS service levels

This section tells HM Passport Office staff who is eligible to apply using the different tiered application service (TAS) levels.

Everyone can apply for a passport using the Standard service.

Who can apply for the Digital Fast Track service

See Digital Fast Track: who can apply.

Who can apply for the Premium service

See Premium service: who can apply.

Who can apply for urgent government business or compassionate travel

Adults and children can apply for a passport urgently if they can show they need the passport for urgent government business or compassionate travel. They can do this at a public counter or by upgrading their standard passport.

We will only issue a passport if there are no safeguarding concerns, and the intended passport holder has a claim to British nationality. If we have not completed our checks, we may issue a restricted validity passport.

See Urgent government business or compassionate travel guidance, for information on:

- what evidence is needed to confirm an urgent need for a passport
- who can authorise a child's passport application in this circumstance

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Examining TAS applications

This section tells HM Passport Office staff what they must consider before they agree to process the customer's application under one of the guaranteed service levels.

You, the examiner, must always do the correct checks, regardless of the application and service type a customer applies for. You must case note your actions and decisions and document scan all documents, in line with current policy and guidance.

Before you pass an application for issue, you must be satisfied:

- with the customer's identity
- that the customer has a claim (in line with nationality legislation)
- with the customer's entitlement
- that you have no vulnerability or safeguarding concerns

If you have doubts, you must:

- carry out all necessary checks (for example, asking for a previous file (if you need it))
- contact the customer and tell them they do not qualify for a guaranteed service (unless the Counter Fraud team has an interest in the application)
- consider refunding the customer's TAS fee (if they applied for a guaranteed service)

For potentially fraudulent cases or if the Counter Fraud team is dealing with a suspect case, you must consult with them before contacting the customer in case it interferes with their investigation.

Straightforward applications and service guarantees

We can only offer a guaranteed service (Premium, Fast Track or upgrade) when we receive a straightforward application (and for upgrades, when we are currently offering the upgrade service). A straightforward application, includes:

- a fully completed application
- correct supporting documents (to confirm nationality and identity)
- the correct fee
- photos

We do not offer a Premium service for child applications.

We will consider child applications for Fast Track (and upgrades if upgrade facilities are being offered), if they meet the criteria, but they must include:

- all the bullets above
- an acceptable referee who has confirmed all the customers details are correct

You, the examiner, must accept that an application is straightforward and complete when you have:

- examined the application (in line with standard guidance)
- no doubts about the customer's identity, nationality and entitlement
- no safeguarding (protection) or vulnerability concerns
- no other concerns associated with the application that mean you cannot examine the application within the service level requested because the application requires:
 - additional checks
 - additional interventions (such as the customer needing to attend an interview)

Vulnerability indicators may include:

- court orders
- applications with letters from other authorities
- discrepancies with consent
- indicators that a child is at risk of abuse
- indicators that a child has a disability, which prevents them signing their passport

Straightforward application: counter

If you are dealing with a counter application on DAP, you must record and scan all relevant documents, and case note your actions, decisions, and outcomes.

Counter application due to compassionate reasons

If a customer visits an APC as they need their passport quickly, because of compassionate reasons, follow TAS urgent government business or compassionate guidance.

If we agree to deal with the application, we will try to issue the passport as soon as possible. However, it may not always be possible to process within 4 hours. Most customers can usually collect their passport on the same day.

Non-straightforward applications

We must do identity and nationality checks on every application. If we cannot complete our checks, we may not meet service level guarantees (for example, for a Premium service). In these cases, we will view the application as non-straightforward.

If you receive a non-straightforward application from a customer who asked for a guaranteed service, you must explain the situation to the customer and tell them why we cannot meet the service guarantee.

You must:

- tell them the new expected turnaround time for their application
- add a case note explaining:
 - the customer has been informed we will not meet the service guarantee
 - why we cannot meet the service level,
 - any actions needed
- tell the customer their application will not continue as a Digital Fast Track or Premium service application; it will be processed as a standard application

Non-straightforward applications: case notes

If the application is not straightforward and requires additional checks, supporting documents or processing you, the counter examiner, must make sure your case note explains in detail:

- why we cannot meet the customer's preferred service level
- your recommendation for the next course of action

Non-straightforward applications: counter

If you are dealing with a counter application on DAP, you must record and scan all relevant documents, and case note your actions, decisions, and outcomes.

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Premium service

This section tells HM Passport Office operational staff about the Premium service.

For details about the Premium service, see:

- Premium service: who can apply
- Premium service: how a customer applies

Premium service applications are processed on DAP (Digital Application Processing). See Premium service: processing the application, which includes guidance about how:

- counter staff process applications
- back office staff handle applications, including printing passports locally and dealing with applications sent to the DAP national queue
- to deal with applications transferred from DAP to AMS (Application Management System), before or during processing
- national queue examiners process Premium service applications, and in which scenarios

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Digital Fast Track service

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about the Digital Fast Track service.

For details about the Digital Fast Track service, see:

- Digital Fast Track: who can apply
- Digital Fast Track: how a customer applies

Digital Fast Track applications are processed on DAP (Digital Application Processing). See Digital Fast Track: processing the application, which includes guidance about how:

- counter staff process applications
- back office staff handle applications, including Digital Fast Track Collect
- to deal with applications transferred from DAP to AMS (Application Management System), before or during processing
- national queue examiners process Digital Fast Track applications, and in which scenarios

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Standard service applications

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about the standard service. Standard service in the United Kingdom guidance explains what our Standard service is.

Customers can apply for the Standard service:

- [by post](#)
- [online at GOV.UK](#)
- by posting it in the Application Processing Centre (APC) post box
- [using the Post Office Check and Send service \(UK applications only\)](#)
- through Local Services (when we offer this service) (overseas applications only)

The fees needed for a Standard service differ depending on how the customer applies (for example, using a paper form or online) and where they are applying from (from the UK or overseas, for example).

Standard service: upgrades

If a customer applies for a Standard service application, you may be able to upgrade it to a Fast Track or Premium service if HM Passport Office are currently offering the upgrade service, and the customer:

- meets the criteria
- they pay the extra fee

If HM Passport Office is offering the upgrade service, customers can apply using GOV.UK. If the service is unavailable the ability to apply for it will be removed from GOV.UK.

Standard service: timescales

We publish up to date turnaround times for UK and overseas passport applications on [GOV.UK](#). Applications from overseas countries may take longer.

We do not give priority to applications from Post Office branches over UK postal work (applications posted directly by a customer).

Standard service timescales: unreasonable delays made by our staff

If we have unreasonably delayed an application due to an error made by our staff:

- we may consider giving the customer a gratis (free) upgrade (this only applies to UK applications, as we do not upgrade overseas applications)
- the customer may have the right to a free Emergency Travel Document (ETD)

Standard service timescales: service delay upgrades

You must refer to the upgrades and expedited service guidance for guidance on how to process service delay upgrades.

Standard service: returning passports and documents

For information on how and when we return documents and deliver passports for UK applications, see: posting passports and documents guidance.

For customers applying from overseas, we will deliver:

- new passports by secure delivery (the customer can collect their supporting documents from a Local service office)
- supporting documents using our overseas secure delivery providers (the customer can collect their supporting documents from a Local service office)

How to correct Standard service errors

If you find an error on a passport we originally issued through the Standard service, you must issue the customer a new passport using the Standard service. If they give us evidence, they are travelling in less than 2 weeks, you must offer the [Premium service](#).

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