



Home Office

Identity & Passport Service

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Reference: FOICR 24007/12

20 September 2012

Dear xxxxxxxxxxxx

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your e-mail of 22 August, in which you ask for information about passport interviews conducted by telephone. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I am able to disclose the information set out in the enclosed Annex.

I hope that this information meets your requirements. I would like to assure you that we have provided you with all relevant information that the Identity and Passport Service (IPS) holds.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to the address below, quoting reference FOICR 24007/12. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

Information Access Team
Home Office
Ground Floor, Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
E-mail: FOIRequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by members of staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Yours sincerely

Xxxx Xxxxxxx
Parliamentary & Correspondence Management Team

Freedom of Information request from xxxxxxxxx (reference 24007/12)

Information requested and IPS responses set out below.

1. How many interviews have you conducted over "unsecured" phone-lines in each of the last three years ?

Firstly I should explain that on the rare occasions when our IT equipment fails, that as a contingency measure, a telephone interview is offered to the passport applicant. Under the circumstances the telephone is the only way for us to continue to communicate with the customer. IPS cannot guarantee that the line is secure. The customer is given the option to choose whether to continue with the interview by telephone or to re-book for a later appointment.

The security of the telephone lines usage was given due consideration by us. We concluded that the risk of the phone line being compromised was extremely low.

Approximately 54 contingency interviews were conducted in 2009/10 (this was a part year as the service only began in June)

90 contingency interviews were conducted in 2010-11

60 contingency interviews were conducted in 2011-12

The maximum percentage of interviews conducted by contingency during this period is 3.6% of the overall Video Interview Service (VIS).

2. How many people have turned down the offer of an interview over an "unsecured" phone-line in each of the last three years?

4 customers in total have refused a contingency interview throughout the life of the VIS service

3. Has the use of "unsecured" phone-lines for the purpose of passport interviews been given Ministerial Approval ? If so by which Minister(s) and on what date(s)?

No. Local procedures at this level do not require ministerial approval.

4. If Ministerial approval has not been given who in your organisation approved use of "unsecured" phone lines and on what date?

The use of contingency procedures was approved during the design of the VIS service by a fully informed project board, including the head of security. The final approval was received when VIS formally went live on 4th June 2009.

Date **20 September 2012**