



Home Office

Nationality procedures: Passports (handling)

Version 1.0

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About this guidance

This guidance tells Nationality caseworkers about the general handling of passports.

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 the Nationality policy 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 Rules and Forms team.

Publication

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

- version **1.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **14 July 2017**

Changes from last version of this guidance

New guidance.

Related content

[Contents](#)

General handling of passports

This page tells you what to do when a passport is received as part of an application.

Acknowledgements

On receipt of an application form, the post room will forward a letter to the applicant acknowledging the receipt of the passports and supporting documentation. A copy of this letter must be attached to the Home Office file.

Receipt of passports

Caseworkers must take into account that passports are valuable documents and that considerable inconvenience can be caused to holders of passports which are lost or cannot be located quickly. It is important that when passports are received they are linked with the correct file as soon as possible. They should be placed in a document pouch together with any other documents that are to be returned to the applicant once a decision has been made on the case. All other non returnable paperwork should be tagged to the file in the usual way. If further documentation is received it should be placed with the other valuables in the document pouch. Any general correspondence must be attached to the file underneath the document pouch.

Safekeeping of passports

To improve the management of retained documents the Home Office has set up a national valuable document bank (VDB).

The VDB has been in operation since June 2013. Its aim is to improve the consistency of document handling by reducing the loss of valuable documents and compensation payments

You must not transfer a passport or valuable document from an area of the business to another without a full explanation of the move and attaching relevant information so that it is clear who the document(s) relate to. This must include the applicant's full name, date of birth and Home Office reference number.

You must

- use a valuable document envelope (VDE) to transport the documents
- record the transfer on the record management system
- update the CID notes with the details of where the documents are to be sent

Return of passports

Where a request is made for the return of documents, it is essential that staff deal with it without delay, especially when a passport is required for urgent travel. Passports and travel documents must be copied and returned ahead of a decision being made on the application. This will avoid the need for the passport to be seen later in the consideration process.

All other documents should be retained in the pouch accompanying the application form, and only be returned if there is a compelling reason to do so.

Return of documents once a decision is made

All the documents submitted in support of the application must be returned immediately to the applicant once a decision has been made.

Loss of contact with applicants

If the package is subsequently returned by the post office, all reasonable steps must be taken to trace the holder. You must try to obtain a current address by contacting referees or employers preferably by telephone. If contact cannot be made the passports should be forwarded to the valuable documents bank, see [safekeeping of passports](#).

Lost Passports

The main reason for passports being lost is failure to comply with the instructions for general handling of passports. If a passport cannot be located the applicant (or their representative) should be informed of the matter, and the steps being taken to find the passport.

If a passport is not found and the holder, and the holder claims compensation for its loss the procedure for ex gratia payments should be followed.

Related content

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