



Home Office

Interviews: overview of the interview process

Version 6.0

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff what an interview is, who must attend, how a customer books an appointment and the types of interviews we offer.

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About: Interviews: overview of the interview process

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff:

- what a passport interview is
- who must attend a passport interview
- how a customer books a passport interview

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 Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards.

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 Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards.

Publication

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

- version **6.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **26 September 2022**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to reflect the change in our sovereign from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to His Majesty King Charles III.

Related content

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Customer interviews

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff why we interview customers. It includes when we will invite customers to attend an interview, what happens at an interview and what happens after the interview.

A passport interview is an important part of the passport application process, we use it to protect people's identity and reduce identity fraud. Passport interviews help us:

- prove the person attending the interview is the rightful holder of the claimed identity
- prove the parent (attending an interview) is related to the child as claimed (for overseas child applications)
- to issue a passport to the correct person

When we invite customers to attend an interview

We [invite selected customers to attend an interview](#). When we are ready to interview the customer, Teleperformance or the Central Booking team (for overseas customers) will contact the customer by letter or email and invite them to [make an appointment](#) for an interview.

We tell the customer:

- what [kind of interview](#) is available to them
- we will use spoken English and Welsh (when requested for interviews held in Wales) during the interview and employ an [interpreter](#) if needed
- what they [need to bring with them](#)
- who can [go to the interview with the customer](#)

What customers must bring to their interview

Customers must bring their appointment letter or email with them to the interview, as it shows their booking reference number.

Customers must also bring photo identification (for example, a driving licence) with them if we are interviewing them by video. For example, if they attend their [video interview in an overseas Visa Application Centre \(VAC\)](#), or a [remote area in the UK](#).

Who can go to the interview with the customer

For security purposes and to keep the privacy of the people interviewed, we only allow people we've asked to attend an interview into an interview office.

If the customer needs help on the journey to the office, a friend, relative, a specialist helper or a carer can go with them. The specialist helper will be welcome at the

interview location but must not answer any questions for the customer during the interview.

We do not allow family, relatives, children or the public into an interview office unless they are there in the role of a specialist helper or carer.

Parents or guardians of 16- or 17-year olds may accompany them to the interview.

What happens at an interview

At customer service centres, when a customer arrives for an interview their bags will be placed in a scanner and searched for safety reasons.

The interview will last approximately 30 minutes for an application from the UK and 60 minutes for an application from overseas. The customer service officer (CSO) who interviews the customer must:

- compare the customer with the facial image shown on the passport issuing system (if the application is for an adult)
- confirm their claimed relationship with the child (if the application is for a child resident overseas)
- ask the customer a variety of questions to help confirm their identity
- ask the customer to sign their signature, on the signature form, to check for any risk indicators and to compare with the signature on the passport issuing system (if the customer is an adult and there is a signature recorded)

Recording an interview

We audio record all interviews and video record skype interviews for security purposes and to help with the interview decision. The recording will help:

- to review the interview decision
- to quality check the interview process
- any investigative casework
- protect the customer and CSO conducting the interview from false allegations of inappropriate behaviour
- review the CSO performance

We hold the audio recordings for 28 days from the date of the interview unless otherwise requested by Counter Fraud team (CFT) managers.

What happens after the interview

When a CSO completes the interview, they record their decision or recommendations on the passport issuing system, and HM Passport Office will complete further checks before a passport is issued.

If we have fraud concerns about the interview, we must refer the application to CFT. For example, we must refer the application to CFT if we do not think the person

attending the interview is the holder of the identity. CFT may decide to do a further interview.

The interview office cannot print the customer's passport immediately after the interview. HM Passport Office print passports in application processing centres and their central print facility.

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Who must attend a passport interview

This section tells HM Passport Office staff which customers must attend an interview and what to do if they are unable to attend.

We interview customers who live in the UK and overseas if their application fits the criteria for an identity interview.

Interviews: customers applying in the UK

Adult customers applying for their first British passport must attend an interview in person if they are resident in the UK, and:

- they are 16 to 69 years of age
- they were previously issued a restricted validity passport because they could not attend an interview
- they are applying to renew or replace a machine-readable passport or an Old Blue (hardback style) passport and we cannot find a record of the passport in our archives
- they have never held their own passport, but their details were shown on a relative's passport (for example, if their details were included on a spouse's Old Blue passport or a parent's passport)
- any other adult applicant where we have not been able to confirm their identity through other checks or have fraud concerns

Interviews: customers who apply from overseas

We assess overseas customers applications based on the documents they provide and where they live. We will ask customers who live or whose documents come from a group 3 country, to attend an interview if they are an adult:

- applying for their first British passport
- applying for a first British passport for a child

When the intended passport holder is a child, the person who must attend the interview will be (in order of preference) the:

- claim parent (if they have parental responsibility (PR))
- parent who gave consent for the application (if the claim parent is not available or does not have PR)
- anyone who has PR for the child (if the parents with PR are not available)
- person without PR but who is acting in place of a parent (known as loco parentis)

UK and overseas customers we will not interview

We must try to recognise customers who are exempt from attending an interview before inviting them to make an appointment.

If we have enough information from identity checks, we will not interview an adult customer applying for their first British passport when they:

- are 70 years old or over unless there are any fraud concerns
- were naturalised within the last 12 months and UK Visa and Immigration service's records confirm the customer's photo identity and personal details (unless there have been changes to their name since they were naturalised)
- are members of HM Armed Forces applying for their first British passport through the armed forces application route
- are dependants of members of HM Armed Forces who applied through the armed forces application route and can be verified from Home Office records
- are members or dependants of members of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and they are also applying for a Diplomatic or Official passport
- supply a Home Office status letter issued by the Windrush task force, which specifically names and confirms the nationality or immigration status of the intended passport holder, unless you:
 - have any fraud concerns
 - believe UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) have made an error on the letter

You must continue to interview the customer, if you receive a Home Office status letter issued by the Windrush task force regarding the nationality or immigration status of the intended passport holder's:

- parent
- grandparent

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When we will waive an interview

This section tells HM Passport Office staff what we must consider as an exception to enable us to waive (put aside) the customer's passport interview.

We will consider waiving a passport interview for customers in the UK and overseas if they:

- have a [permanent mental or physical disability or terminal illness](#)
- fit the criteria for a restricted validity passport (RV) due to urgent travel under the Tiered Application Service or compassionate travel
- are a member of HM Armed Forces who applied privately but who are now being posted overseas within 15 days

When we waive an interview a countersignatory or digital referee must be obtained before issuing a passport.

Permanent disability or terminal illness

We must not send the customer for an interview if we identify vulnerability during the application process. The application must be handled in line with guidance.

If we invite the customer for interview, and they tell us they cannot attend because they have a permanent disability or terminal illness, you must ask the customer for written confirmation on headed paper, from a:

- doctor
- care home manager
- social worker
- hospital consultant

The letter must describe the disability and confirm if it is going to be permanent or if they expect an improvement to the customer's health. You must check the name of the GP, consultant and surgery exists with external reference sources. If the customer gives you the confirmation, they are unable to take part in an interview as a medical exemption then we would issue a fully valid 10-year passport.

We must recall the application from the interview process if we have already asked the customer to attend an interview.

Short term disability or hospitalisation

We will not waive an interview for customers who are unable to attend a passport interview because of short term disability or hospitalisation. We must tell them:

- they must attend an interview before we will issue them a passport

- we will hold their application open if they can attend the interview within 6 weeks
- we will withdraw the application and refund the fee, if they will be unable to attend an interview within 6 weeks

HM Armed Forces urgent deployment

We will ask members of His Majesty's Armed Forces (HM Forces) and their dependents, to attend passport interviews if they do not apply through the dedicated HM Forces route. We may waive the interview if a member of HM Forces applied privately and they tell us they are being posted overseas within 15 days. This does not apply to dependants as they must still attend an interview in this circumstance.

If the Forces personnel did not apply through the HM Forces route and tell us they are being deployed overseas within 15 days, you must:

1. Examine the application in accordance with current guidance.
2. Ask the customer for a letter from their commanding officer confirming the deployment.
3. Confirm the details of the letter using online resources and contacting the commanding officer where necessary.
4. Override the system to stop the application being sent into the interview process.
5. Add a case note to record your actions and decisions and scan the letter as a permanent record.
6. Issue a fully valid passport.

If the member of HM Forces who applied privately is travelling abroad on any other type of urgent government business, you must issue the passport with restricted validity. We will only waive an interview if the customer is being deployed.

When we will waive an overseas interview

We will waive an interview on a case by case basis for overseas adult and child applications but only if we have enough information to confirm their identity, nationality and entitlement from our checks.

We will not ask overseas customers to attend an interview, if the customer:

- has a permanent medical condition that prevents them from attending
- has exceptional circumstances preventing them from attending a face to face or VIS interview (however we may consider [a telephone interview](#))

Overseas customers at risk of harm

We will not ask overseas customers to attend an interview, if the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) advises against travel in the interview country. We must not send the customer for an interview if they send us evidence which shows there:

- are safeguarding (protection) concerns
- is a need to exempt them from interview because:
 - of a crisis
 - of domestic conflict (for example, a civil war)
 - the customer needs to leave the country because they are in danger

If you receive evidence from the customer showing they are at risk from harm, you must refer the application to the Counter Fraud Team (CFT).

The CFT senior investigating officer (SIO) will review the application, case note their decision and return it to you telling you what you must do.

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Types of passport interviews

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about the types of interviews we provide.

We provide different types of interview depending on whether the customer is in the UK or overseas.

UK face to face interviews: UK and international customers

HM Passport Office conduct personal face to face interviews in interview locations throughout the UK for adult customers who are resident in the UK. This includes where the child is resident overseas, but the claim parent is resident in the UK.

The customer must attend the interview in person and a customer service officer (CSO) must interview them.

Remote interviews

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we may need to interview the customer remotely using Skype.

Video interview service (VIS): remote UK customers

We offer a video interview service (VIS) for first time adult and replacement passport (known as Passport Application Interview (PAI) multi loss) customers who live in remote areas of the UK.

VIS allows customers to attend interviews using the Skype for Business application on secure laptops in approved host offices. The approved host offices known as local administrators are set in local council offices (for example, a Registrar's Office) or in private businesses.

The video interview sites link up to interview offices in Glasgow and Belfast, allowing HM Passport Office to complete the interview process.

Video Interview Service: overseas customers

The central booking team (CBT) will send an overseas customer an email inviting them for a VIS interview once the examiner has referred the application to them. The CBT must check the available appointments in both VIS and overseas VAC (Visa Application Centre) locations, considering any time zone differences

Customers can choose which VAC they wish to attend.

What happens at a VIS interview

If the customer must attend their interview in an overseas Visa Application Centre (VAC). CSOs in Sheffield and Belfast will conduct the interview by video link with the VAC.

Telephone interviews: overseas customers only

Customers must phone CBT if they are unable to travel to an interview for an overseas application.

CBT will update the Interview Appointment Booking (IAB) tool with the customer's country of residence, record why they are unable to travel to an interview and refer the case back to the examining team in HM Passport Office.

An examiner dealing with the application must contact the customer by email and ask for evidence to confirm why they are unable to attend an interview. For example, medical reasons, caring responsibilities, work reasons, travel restrictions or if they have just had a baby). The withdrawal process will apply if the customer does not send in the evidence within 56 days or book a VIS interview.

If there are urgent circumstances and no fraud or protection concerns, we must consider the customer's needs, and use discretion on a case by case basis to decide if we can exceptionally offer a telephone interview in one of the VACs which offers this service for their home country.

We may offer a telephone interview exceptionally if an overseas customer cannot travel to attend an interview if they live in:

- Australia
- Canada
- United States of America

If they live in Europe, they will need to travel to Holland, France or the Republic of Ireland.

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How we manage interview appointments

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how customers book an interview, change or cancel an interview.

HM Passport Office will send letters and emails to tell the customer they need to attend an interview.

Telling a UK customer, they need an interview

Once the UK application is complete the Application Management System (AMS) will automatically prompt our partners, Teleperformance, to send the customer an interview invitation letter or email. The letter asks the customer to call the interview appointment booking line to book their interview appointment.

The Customer service management team (CSMT) must send the customer reminder letters at regular intervals if the customer does not make an appointment. CSMT will:

- send reminder letters to the customer after 28 days and 42 days of the original invitation being issued
- withdraw the customer's application if they do not book an ABI appointment after 56 days of the original invitation being issued

If the customer's application is processed using Digital Application Processing (DAP) the system will:

- send the customer an email asking them to ring the customer contact centre (Teleperformance) or the interview hub for skype interviews to book their interview
- automatically send the customer reminders, and withdraw the application in line with guidance if the customer does not contact us

UK customers who refuse to attend

HM Passport Office will withdraw the customers application and keep the passport fee if the customer refuses to attend or does not book an interview. The withdrawal process will apply if the customer does not book an interview within:

- 7 weeks if processed by AMS
- 6 weeks if processed by DAP

UK interview letters returned by Royal Mail

If Royal Mail are unable to deliver an interview letter to the customer, they will return it to CSMT in Southport.

CSMT will contact the offices by email to tell examiners if the interview letter has been undeliverable.

You, the examiner, must contact the customer by phone or email and ask them to confirm their address, if Royal Mail has returned their interview letter undelivered. If the address on the application is incorrect you must ask the customer to send in proof of their address, for example, a utility bill as evidence. You must doc scan the address evidence to the application when received.

You must arrange to have the application recalled from interview as all the details must be correct on the application before an interview can take place. Once you receive proof of the address and case noted your decision you can resend the application into the interview process.

If the customer does not respond the application will be withdrawn in line with our withdrawal policy.

Booking an interview: UK

Customers can have an interview at any of the public interview offices across the UK or alternatively due to the Covid-19 pandemic we will try to interview the customer remotely using Skype.

They can find their nearest office at www.gov.uk/passport-interview-office. UK customers can make, change or cancel an appointment by phoning the interview appointment booking service.

When the customer calls to make an appointment for an interview the appointment booking line or the interview hub must ask the customer to confirm some of their personal details:

- surname
- forename(s)
- date of birth
- address

The customer must say if they need:

- hearing induction loops
- wheelchair access
- a sign language interpreter
- welsh interpreter
- someone with them during the interview, such as a parent or carer (the parent or carer cannot answer any of the questions on their behalf)

If a customer misses an appointment and does not rearrange it, we may consider withdrawing the application in line with our withdrawal policy and keeping the fee to cover the work already completed.

Telling an overseas customer, they need an interview

When overseas customers need an interview, the examiner will enter the customers details on the Case management tool (CMT) tracker.

The central booking team (CBT) will use the CMT tracker to identify customers who need an interview and send them an interview invitation within 2 days. They will tell the customer:

- why they need to book an interview appointment
- how to book their appointment
- what kind of interviews are available, for example, face to face, video or telephone
- where the interview will be (including the possibility of travelling to another country for a face to face interview)
- the interview will be in spoken English

Central booking team: managing a booking request

The CBT will contact the customer by email asking them to phone and book an interview appointment. When they send the email, they will electronically move the application into virtual storage.

If the customer does not respond to the invitation to book an appointment the CBT will issue email reminders after 14 and 28 days.

If the customer has not booked an appointment after 60 days, the CBT must:

1. Take the application out of virtual storage.
2. Make a note on the interview booking system to confirm the customer has not made an appointment.
3. Use the Case Management Tool (CMT) to refer the case back to the examiner who will decide how to continue.

Telephone interviews: overseas only

We can offer a telephone interview exceptionally if a customer cannot travel to attend a:

- face to face interview
- video interview (from an overseas Visa Application Centre)

This service is only available to overseas customers when they live in:

- Australia
- Canada
- the United States of America

If they live in Europe, they will need to travel to the Netherlands, France or the Republic of Ireland.

Overseas customers who tell us they cannot attend an interview

If a customer tells you, the examiner, they cannot attend interview they must send a letter explaining why they are unable to attend.

You must consider the reason the customer cannot travel to attend an interview to see if:

- they meet another exception.
- a telephone interview would be fair and reasonable

If it is clear the customer can complete an interview, but health, caring responsibilities or travel restrictions prevent them from attending a VIS interview. Group 3 team can offer a facilitated telephone interview. The telephone interview will take place in one of the VACS which offers this service in their home country.

If we can offer a telephone interview you must refer the application to the group 3 team to create a new case on the tracker. This will transfer the case to central booking team to make the appointment booking.

BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters cannot do telephone interviews.

If it is clear the customer cannot attend an interview or they tell us they need a BSL interpreter to help with their application, you must refer the application back to the group 3 team.

The Central Booking team

The Central Booking team (CBT) receive notifications of the need to book an interview via the Case Management Tool (CMT) which is issued by the group 3 team.

CBT must send a letter to the customer asking them to call them to arrange a telephone interview.

When the customer contacts them CBT must confirm the customers location, the VAC they wish to attend and their availability.

CBT must:

1. Email TLS or Visa Facilitation Service Global (VFS) (depending on which country it is for) to tell them a telephone interview is needed.
2. Confirm with the supplier and London Globe House when there would be availability.
3. Once confirmed they will phone the customer to tell them of the appointment and send them a confirmation email.
4. Email the supplier a copy of the applicants photographs and interview form.

5. Update the tracker to highlight this is a telephone interview and assign the case to London Globe House.

When the customer lives overseas and needs a face to face or video interview, CBT will send an email to the customer telling them the available locations (including the option to travel to the UK for a face to face interview).

The customer must call CBT to book an interview and CBT must access the interview appointment booking tool (IAB) and look for an appointment which meets the customers and HM Passport Office needs.

If the customer needs a video interview service (VIS) appointment the IAB will only show appointments available in both the:

- overseas visa application centre (VAC) (who will assist with the interview)
- the UK interview location (who will conduct the interview remotely)

If a customer needs a video interview service (VIS) and an interpreter, the interpreter must attend Vulcan House, Sheffield or Belfast Law Society House and a 3-way Skype interview will take place.

If the customer needs an interpreter in Carlisle, Norwich, Yeovil, Aberystwyth and Hull, the interpreter will attend Belfast office and for those in the remote communities in Scotland, they will attend the Glasgow office.

CBT must book the customer into an available appointment on IAB which will send the customer an automated email confirming the details, including the address of the interview location (for example, the overseas VAC).

If a customer does not receive confirmation of their interview, they must contact the CBT for confirmation. Using the search facility CBT can get information from IAB, check the customers email address and reissue the email.

Notifying the supplier about an interview

Every Thursday morning before 12 noon the CBT will email a copy of the week's appointment schedule to the relevant supplier and Sheffield or Belfast VIS office.

If there are any more bookings, amendments or cancellations for the coming week CBT will email the supplier and the interviewing office separately.

Rearranging the overseas interview or location

Customers must phone or email the CBT if they need to rearrange their interview, including changing the interview location. They must contact CBT by:

- email at HMPOLInternationalBookingTeam@hmpo.gov.uk
- phone on +44 (0)203 4508889

If CBT change the interview, the customer's booking reference will remain the same.

The CBT will:

1. Check availability on the IAB.
2. Cancel the original appointment and book a new one.
3. Rearrange [any pre-booked interpreter](#).
4. Add a case note onto the passport issuing system application explaining the changes.
5. Send an updated appointment list to the relevant VAC confirming the new details.

Canceling an overseas interview

If the customer wishes to cancel their interview, they must phone the CBT, who will cancel the original appointment on IAB and tell the relevant VAC office. CBT will also [cancel any pre-booked interpreters](#).

CBT must refer the application back to the examining team if the customer:

- does not rearrange their appointment
- continues to cancel on more than 3 occasions
- exceeds the 3-month timescale for the application to be on the system without booking an interview

Issues booking appointments: overseas

The CBT must email the Sheffield or Belfast site if there are any issues or problems about overseas appointment bookings made with them.

If there any issues or problems about appointment bookings with the VACs, CBT must contact HM Passport Office's Customer service management team.

Interpreters

We do not charge the customer if they need an interpreter, we book official interpreters through:

- UK Visa and Immigration's Interpreter Operations Unit (UKVI IOU) for spoken languages
- The Big Word for sign language and Welsh interpreters

Customers cannot have members of their family acting as an interpreter or cannot make arrangements to book their own interpreter.

Interpreters for UK interviews

We will not pre-book interpreters before the customer attends a UK interview unless the customer needs a sign language interpreter or a Welsh interpreter. Customers

who need a sign language or Welsh interpreter must let us know when they make their appointment.

If the customer service officer (at the interview) thinks the customer cannot take part in the interview because of language difficulties, they will book a further interview with an interpreter.

Interpreters for overseas interviews

The Central Booking team (CBT) will book an interpreter for an overseas interview if during the booking phone call:

- they decide the customer does not have enough knowledge of the English language to complete the interview
- the customer or third-party representative tells them the customer needs an interpreter

Interpreters unavailable

If we are unable to offer an interpreter to a customer, the customer service interview officer must contact the relevant office and ask them to recall the application.

You, the examiner, must send a referral to Guidance and Quality team to consider if you can either waive the interview or issue the customer with a Restricted Validity (RV) passport

Cancelling an interpreter: UK

A customer must contact Teleperformance (TP) if they wish to cancel their booked interview. Before TP amends or cancels the interview they must check if a customer service officer (CSO) has already booked an interpreter. If an interpreter is due to attend the interview, TP must contact UKVI IOU to cancel the interpreter, TP ABI service desk must send an e-mail to the interviewing office to alert them.

UKVI IOU will send a list of the interpreters the interview offices are expecting to attend the office 48 hours before an interview appointment. When interview offices compare their daily appointment lists, the working day before the interview, they will realise if a customer has cancelled an interview appointment overnight.

Cancelling an interpreter: overseas

Customers must phone the CBT if they have booked an interpreter for an overseas interview but are unable to travel to the appointment.

The CBT must email UKVI Interpreter Operations Unit (IOU) to cancel the interpreter booking. The email must include the following information in the subject field:

'Cancelled interview - interview scheduled for [INSERT DATE] in [INSERT APPOINTMENT LOCATION], cancelled. Application number [INSERT NUMBER]

If the cancellation is within 24 hours of the planned interview the CBT must telephone the IOU on 0151 2132105 before sending the email. IOU must contact the interpreter to tell them we have cancelled the interview.

CBT will update the Interview Appointment Booking (IAB) tool with the customer's country of residence, record why they are unable to travel to an interview and refer the case back to the examining team in HM Passport Office.

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