



Home Office

Freedom of Information requests

Version 4.0

This guidance is for His Majesty's Passport Office staff, it tells them about Freedom of Information requests, and how they must deal with these.

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About: Freedom of Information requests

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about Freedom of Information requests, and how they must deal with these.

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 **4.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **29 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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Freedom of Information requests

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about Freedom of Information requests, and how they must deal with these.

Any written request for official or business information received by HM Passport Office must, theoretically, be treated as a [Freedom of Information \(FOI\) request](#). However, it is not intended that the [Freedom of Information Act](#) puts unnecessary bureaucratic procedures in the way of disclosing requested information. HM Passport Office already handles a great many information requests every year as part of its normal business, and the majority of these are already being answered efficiently and to the satisfaction of the correspondent. FOI does not change the way in which these simple requests for information are handled within the operational work area.

Operational staff (for example, examiners) are not required to answer FOI requests. However, all staff are expected to know how to recognise a potential or actual FOI request and know to refer it to the Customer Services Manager or Information Adviser on the day of receipt. An FOI request could form part of a letter of complaint or other correspondence connected with a passport application.

Anything done as normal working business such as answering standard passport queries, requests for HM Passport Office publications or any other issue which operational staff have always responded to as a matter of course are not dealt with as FOI. These should continue to be dealt with as business as usual.

FOI requests are those that ask for more complex or potentially sensitive requests for information. They will include requests where the information is not already in the public domain (for example, information not already published by HM Passport Office or on GOV.UK) or where there is uncertainty as to whether HM Passport Office can or should release the information.

FOI requests must be in writing. This includes email. Requesters do not have to say why they want the information or prove who they are. The requester does not have to be British or resident in the UK.

Although the Act stipulates that requests must be in written format, the Act also obliges public authorities to assist even those who propose to make a request but have not yet done so. This consequently means that an oral request for information cannot be ignored; staff must advise the customer of the need to make their application in writing.

All HM Passport Office FOI requests are dealt with by the FOI Team. The team deals with all requests for information from HM Passport Office which goes beyond the day-to-day correspondence that regional offices normally deal with.

Customers asking about accessing information or making an FOI request must be advised to follow the guidance on the [HM Passport Office page on GOV.UK](#). This page tells customers how to email or post their FOI enquiry to us.

Where a request or a potential FOI request has already been received in the office, staff must refer it immediately to their Customer Services Manager or Information Adviser who will decide whether it should be dealt with as a FOI request, or as a standard passport enquiry as part of business as usual.

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