



Home Office

Lost or damaged documents

Version 8.0

Instructions for His Majesty's Passport Office staff on replacing documents that have been lost or damaged

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About: Lost or damaged documents

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office operational staff how to:

- establish who is responsible for replacing a lost or damaged document
- arrange a replacement document or tell the customer how to replace the document
- deal with the application that is delayed because of a lost or damaged document

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 **8.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **1 February 2024**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to show how empty envelopes are handled in a Document Handling Unit.

Related content

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Adding a case note or passport note

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners, about a case note or a passport note they must add when they have an application with a lost or damaged document.

If a document is damaged and you, the examiner, are processing the application on the Application Management System (AMS), you must:

- add a case note with full details of the damage and how the damage happened
- check to see if Sopra Steria have sent the envelope with the application and added a note in the office use only part of the form detailing any damage to the document (Sopra Steria will always do this if the envelope is received damaged)

When you receive a report of loss or damage to a document sent with an application you must check if the application is live or if the passport has been issued

If the application is live on AMS, you must:

- check to see if Sopra Steria have sent the envelope with the application and added a note in the office use only part of the form detailing any damage to the document
- add a case note stating:
 - full details of the loss
 - the extent of the damage
 - all the actions you have taken

If the application was on AMS and the passport has been issued, you must:

- check to see if there are any previous case notes stating the document was received damaged or documents were not received with the application
- add a passport note stating:
 - full details of the loss
 - the extent of the damage
 - details of any previous reports of loss or damage
 - all the actions you have taken

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Replacing a lost or damaged document

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office who is responsible for replacing a lost or damaged document and about the process for replacing lost or damaged documents.

You must follow the process for replacing lost or damaged documents, based on when and where in the application process the loss or damage happened.

Document lost or damaged: Royal Mail or Courier

When a document is lost by Royal Mail or a courier on the way to HM Passport Office, you must tell the customer that:

- we are not responsible for the loss
- they must contact Royal Mail or the courier

If a document is damaged by Royal Mail or a courier, you must contact the customer and tell them:

- their document was damaged in transit
- [how to replace the document](#)

Document lost or damaged: Post Office Ltd

When a document is lost and the application was sent using the Check & Send service from Post Office Ltd (POL), you must check the Office use only section of the application form to see if POL received the document.

If POL has marked the document as received, we are responsible for the lost document. See [how to replace a document](#) to arrange a replacement.

If POL has not recorded the document on the application form, tell the customer to contact the Post Office where they submitted their application.

When a document is received damaged and the application was sent using the Check & Send service from POL, you must contact the customer and tell them:

- their document is damaged
- to contact the Post Office where they submitted their application

Document lost or damaged: Local Services

When a document is lost or damaged and the application was sent using Local Services, you must:

1. Contact the Supplier Manager.
2. Give full details of the loss or extent of the damage.

The supplier queries team will investigate and tell you what actions to take.

Document lost or damaged within HM Passport Office

When a document is lost or damaged in an Application Processing Centre (APC), HM Passport Office is responsible.

If the document is lost you must:

- notify the Security Liaison Officer
- conduct a search of all areas

If you cannot find the document, or if it's damaged you must:

- contact the customer as soon as our investigation is complete
- apologise on behalf of HM Passport Office
- tell the customer [how to replace the document](#)

You must try contacting the customer by phone first. If it is not possible (for example, because of a time difference between the customer's country of residence and the UK), then you must contact them by a letter or email.

Document lost or damaged within a Document Handling Unit

When a document is lost or damaged in a Document Handling Unit (DHU), HM Passport Office is responsible. You must refer to [How to deal with documents lost or damaged by a DHU](#).

Document lost or damaged after being posted

When a document is lost or damaged after we have posted it to the customer, you must investigate how the document was returned.

If the document was sent through Whistl, you must tell the customer that:

- we are not liable for the loss or damage
- they must contact Whistl

If the document was returned by Royal Mail and the customer paid for Secure Delivery, HM Passport Office is responsible for replacing the document and you must:

- apologise on behalf of HM Passport Office
- tell the customer [how to replace the document](#)

If the document was sent by secure delivery (for example, through DHL), HM Passport Office is responsible for replacing the document and you must:

- apologise on behalf of HM Passport Office
- tell the customer [how to replace the document](#)
- contact the Supplier Manager giving full details of the loss or damage and send them all related receipts

Timescale for claims

A claim for compensation must be made within 12 months of a final decision on the original application.

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How to deal with documents lost or damaged by a DHU

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office how to deal with applications in Digital Application Processing when the customers documents that are lost or damaged in transit to or by a Document Handling Unit (DHU).

In all cases of damaged documents, the Document Handling Unit (DHU) will try and validate them first.

How you deal with the lost or damaged document will depend on:

- if the document was lost or damaged in transit to a DHU
- if the document was lost or damaged by the DHU

Documents lost or damaged in transit to a DHU

If the customers documents were lost or damaged on their way to a DHU, the DHU will check if the envelope is empty or if the contents of it can still be validated.

If the envelope is empty, the DHU will register the empty envelope as a non-scannable, empty envelope received (EER) item. The non-scannable item details will be included on the Application Received Domain (ARD) system, but a scanned image will not be available.

If the envelope is not empty but the documents are too damaged for the DHU to validate them, they will fail the validation.

When the DHU staff fail the validation, they give the documents to the embedded civil servants (ECS) who will complete extra validation checks. This will create a task for the examiner to deal with.

If the envelope is not empty but the DHU can validate the documents, they will:

- scan and validate the documents
- scan the damaged envelope as a supporting document
- put an advice slip with the customers documents to tell them that their documents were damaged on the way to HM Passport Office

If the envelope is not empty and the DHU validate the documents, there will not be a task for the examiner to deal with.

Lost or damaged in transit: how to deal with the failed validation task

DAP will generate a failed validation task when the DHU could not validate the customer's documents, because they were lost or damaged in transit to a DHU. When this happens, you (the examiner) must:

1. Call the customer and tell them:
 - that on the way to HM Passport Office, their documents were damaged (if the envelope was not empty but the documents could not be validated)
 - they must try and get replacement documents
 - you will send them an email to explain where they must send their documents
 - because the [documents were lost or damaged by Royal Mail or courier](#) in transit to HM Passport Office, we are not responsible for replacing them
2. Send an email to the customer using the Comms builder requesting the documents.

DAP will automatically send reminders to the customer to send their replacement documents to us.

Documents damaged by a DHU

When a document is damaged in a Document Handling Unit (DHU), HM Passport Office is responsible. When a DHU has damaged a customer's documents, how you deal with their documents depends on if the DHU can still validate the documents.

Documents damaged: can still be used to process passport application

If a customer sent us their documents but the DHU damaged them, the DHU will fail the validation and record the document as damaged on Digital Application Processing (DAP).

If the documents are damaged but you (the examiner) can still use them to deal with the passport application, you must:

1. Deal with the application in line with current guidance.
2. Email the Customer Service Management team (CSMT) and tell them:
 - the customer's documents were damaged by the DHU
 - the customer's name
 - the application number

You (the Customer Service Management team) must:

1. Consider if HM Passport Office can [replace the customer's documents](#).
2. Call the customer and tell them their documents were damaged by HM Passport Office, but it did not affect us processing their application.

Documents damaged: cannot be used to process passport application

If a customer sent us their documents but the DHU damaged them, they will fail the validation and DAP will generate a task for the examiner to deal with.

If the DHU damaged the documents so much that you (the examiner) cannot use them to deal with the application, you must:

1. Put the application on hold.
2. Email your local CSMT and tell them:
 - the customer's documents were damaged by the DHU and cannot be validated
 - the customer's name
 - the application number

You, the CSMT, must:

1. Consider if HM Passport Office can [replace the customer's documents](#).
2. Contact the customer and:
 - tell them their documents were damaged by HM Passport Office
 - apologise for the damage
3. Send a letter to the customer that tells them:
 - where they must send the replacement documents and receipts (if CSMT cannot replace the customer's documents)
 - we will get the replacement documents on their behalf and send them to them after we issue the passport (if CSMT can replace the customer's documents)

When the customer's documents are received, the DHU will scan and validate them. DAP will then put the application back in to the examination queue. When this happens, you (the examiner), must:

1. Check the documents are acceptable for passport purposes.
2. Ask the customer for any extra documents you need (for example, evidence they changed their name).
3. Consider if you can [accept alternative documents](#), if a lost document:
 - delays the customer's application
 - cannot be replaced
4. Examine the application in line with current guidance.
5. View the customer's receipt (if they provided one) and send a print screen of it to CSMT.

When you, the CSMT receive the print screen of the customers receipt, you must deal with the refund in line with Compensation: out of pocket expenses guidance.

The finance team will process the customer's refund in line with the Compensation: out of pocket expenses guidance.

Documents lost by a DHU

When a document is lost in a Document Handling Unit (DHU), HM Passport Office is responsible.

If a customer tells us they have sent a document that has been signed for by a DHU that cannot be found in the Application Receive Domain (ARD) inventory, you, the DAP examiner, can ask the Embedded Civil Service team (ECST) to check the customer's application pack held in the DHU (but only in some scenarios – see [Dealing with customer documents guidance](#)). The ECST will inform the examiner of the results of the application pack search. If the document cannot be found by the ECST, you must report this to the CSMT.

In other scenarios, if the customer tells us they sent a package to us and the documents have not been recorded on ARD and have not been signed for by a DHU, CSMT must follow the guidance about items lost in transit. This will create a Lost in transit task in DAP for you, the DAP examiner.

CSMT: documents lost by a DHU

When you receive notification that a document was signed for by a DHU, but we are still asking the customer to send the document, you must complete a search on ARD for the item.

If you cannot find the document on ARD and 48 hours have passed since the document was signed for, you, the Customer Service Management team (CSMT), must email the supplier in the DHU site where the document was signed for to ask for a search for the document, either:

- Corby SSL manager
- Hemel SSL manager

The supplier will have 24 hours from receipt of the request to complete their searches and will report their findings back to the CSMT inbox.

If the supplier finds the document, they will process the item and you must advise the customer of this.

If the supplier confirms a document is lost, or you receive a confirmed document loss notification, you must:

1. Raise a missing document security incident to the PCCR Security Helpdesk).
2. Consider if HM Passport Office can [replace the customer's documents](#).
3. Contact the customer, apologise, and tell them HM Passport Office lost their documents.
4. Send a letter to the customer to tell them:
 - where they must send the replacement documents and receipts (if CSMT cannot replace the customer's documents)

- we will get the replacement documents on their behalf and send them to them after we issue the passport (if CSMT can replace the customer's documents)

When you (the CSMT) receive the print screen of the customer's receipt, you must deal with the refund in line with Compensation: out of pocket expenses guidance.

The finance team will process the customer's refund in line with the Compensation: out of pocket expenses guidance.

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How to replace a document

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners which documents can be replaced by HM Passport Office staff and which documents must be replaced by the customer.

HM Passport Office staff (or the customer) must follow the process for replacing lost or damaged documents, based on the issuing authority.

General Register Office for England and Wales documents

If the document was issued by the General Register Office (GRO) for England and Wales, you must check if the:

- birth was registered more than 6 months ago
- marriage was registered more than 18 months ago

If the certificates are more recent, the customer must contact their local register office for a replacement and forward the receipt to HM Passport Office for a refund.

We can only accept copies or emailed copies of receipts if they show the address of the issuing authority.

When you receive a receipt, you must:

1. Complete a Request to refund applicant fee form.
2. Deal with the refund in line with the Compensation: out of pocket expenses guidance.

If the application is on the Application Management System (AMS), or Digital Application Processing (DAP), and the customer sent their receipt directly to you, you must also:

1. Attach a scanned copy of the receipt.
2. Send the original receipt to confidential waste.

If the application is in DAP, you must also:

1. Tell the Customer Service Management team (CSMT) in your email that the receipt is in the customers supporting documents when both of the following apply:
 - the customer posted their receipt to the Document Management Service (DMS) or Document Handling Unit (DHU)
 - the DMS or DHU have scanned the receipt as a supporting document
2. Use the Application Receive Domain (ARD) to update the document handling instruction to tell the DMS or DHU to send the receipt to confidential waste (see ARD: send a document to confidential waste).

CSMT can use the scanned image of the receipt to process the refund. If the application was processed more than 28 days ago, CSMT can still request to see the scanned images (see Searches and checks: passport and application records).

Notification of lost certificate form

You must complete a notification of lost certificate form, if the:

- birth was registered more than 6 months ago
- marriage was registered more than 18 months ago

If the application is still live, you must state the application reference number, your name, team name and office address in the address section of the form.

You must state the customer's address in the address section of the form when we:

- have already issued the passport
- have closed the application (for example, the application was failed)
- do not need the document to process the application

Email the completed form to the CSMT in Southport.

CSMT will email you once the certificate has been dispatched.

Document issued by National Records of Scotland or Nldirect

If the document was issued by National Records of Scotland or Nldirect, you must tell the customer that they must:

- request a replacement birth, death, adoption or marriage certificate from their local registrar or by contacting the [National Records of Scotland](#) or [Nldirect](#)
- not use a third party agent or service
- send the receipt to HM Passport Office

We can only accept copies or emailed copies of receipts if they show the address of the issuing authority.

When you receive a receipt for the cost of replacing the document, you must:

1. Complete the Request to refund applicant fee form.
2. Email the completed form to the CSMT in Southport.
3. Attach a scanned copy of the receipt.
4. Send the original receipt to confidential waste.

Documents issued by United Kingdom Visas and Immigration

You must complete a notification of lost certificate form if HM Passport Office is responsible for replacing a certificate of naturalisation or registration issued by United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

If the application is still live, you must state the application reference number, your name, team name and office address in the address section of the form. UKVI will send the certificate to the HM Passport Office.

If we have already issued the passport or we have closed the application (for example, if we failed the application) you must state the customer's address in the address section of the form. UKVI will send the certificate directly to the customer.

Email the completed form to the CSMT in Southport, who will order a replacement.

Replacing a foreign document

If we are responsible for replacing a foreign document (for example, a foreign birth certificate), tell the customer to:

1. Contact the issuing authority of that country.
2. Arrange for the document to be replaced.
3. Forward the receipt to the HM Passport Office for a refund.

We can only accept copies or emailed copies of receipts if they show the address of the issuing authority.

When you receive a receipt for the cost of replacing the document, you must:

1. Complete the Request to refund applicant fee form.
2. Email the completed form to the feedback team.
3. Attach a scanned copy of the receipt.
4. Send the original receipt to confidential waste.

Reimbursement of travel costs

If the customer claims they have to travel to the country that issued their document and asks if their travel costs will be refunded, you must:

- check (using official sources) that the document can only be replaced by travelling to the country of issue
- ask the customer to put their request for refund in writing and send the request to you
- refer the request to CSMT
- tell the customer that CSMT will contact them

Requests for payment in advance

If the customer asks for the cost of replacing a document before they apply for the replacement document, you must:

- ask the customer to put their request in writing
- refer the request to CSMT
- tell the customer that CSMT will be in contact with them

Customer insists HM Passport office replace the document

If a customer refuses to get a replacement document and insists we replace the document, tell them that:

- the authorities of the country involved may only deal with the customer themselves and may refuse to deal with a third party
- if the authorities agree to replace the document, the customer will need to send a letter authorising us to arrange a replacement document
- it may take longer to get a replacement

Related content

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When a lost or damaged document delays an application

This page tells you how to deal with applications when the lost or damaged document delays the issue of a passport.

If a lost or damaged document delays the issue of a passport, you must check if that document is needed for us to issue the customer's passport. You can request additional evidence and consider issuing the passport under the balance of probability (meaning that based on additional evidence, there is a high chance that the event recorded on the missing document happened).

If a supporting document sent with an application is lost or damaged, you must:

1. Look at the application as a whole.
2. Consider if additional evidence can be requested and considered under the balance of probability.
3. Consider issuing a restricted validity passport.

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