



Home Office

Interviews: overview of the interview process

Version 23.0

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 and when we can waive the interview requirement
- 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 the 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 **23.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **2 December 2024**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to move the section about how we manage interview appointments and interpreters into a new document.

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, we tell customers to contact our Contact Centres or the Central Booking team 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 (UK customers are expected to attempt their first interview in English, for international customers an interpreter can be arranged at the time of booking)
- what they [need to bring with them](#)
- who can [go to the interview with the customer](#)

Interpreters

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

- UK Visa and Immigration's Interpreter and language services unit (UKVI ILSU) for spoken languages
- The Big Word for Welsh interpreters
- Sign solutions for sign language 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

When we invite a customer to interview in error

If you invite a customer to interview in error you must follow:

- If you send the customer for interview in error on DAP
- How to deal with an application sent for interview in error on AMS

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

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 MS Teams 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. If an interview is failed, the CSO conducting the interview will save the audio record in a dedicated folder that CFT's have access to. It is the responsibility of the Counter Fraud Investigator to delete these records after review.

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. Not all UK customers will be selected to attend an 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 old.

All adult customers aged 16 to 69 years must attend an interview if any of the following apply:

- 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
- 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)
- we have not been able to confirm their identity through other checks or have fraud concerns

You must not send children aged 0 to 15 and resident in the UK for an identity interview. For customers who turn 16 (or are about to turn 16), see [How to deal with customers of different ages](#).

Interviews: customers who apply from overseas

We assess overseas customers applications based on the documents they provide and where they live.

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:

- all customers 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 customers passport interview.

We will consider exceptionally 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

All first time adult applications must already have had a referee provided and examined 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, the examiner, must ask the customer for written confirmation on headed paper, from a:

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

The letter must:

- state the reason why the customer cannot attend the interview at this time
- describe the disability or illness
- confirm the disability or illness is going to be permanent

You, the examiner must check with external reference sources the details of the person who signed the letter and confirm their position. If we receive confirmation the customer is unable to take part in an interview due to a permanent disability 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 illness

If we invite the customer for interview, and they tell us they cannot attend because they have a short term disability or illness, you, the examiner, must ask the customer for written confirmation on headed paper from a medical professional.

The letter must:

- state the reason why the customer cannot attend the interview at this time
- describe the short term disability or illness
- confirm when they expect the customer to be fit enough to attend an interview

You, the examiner must refer the application to your operational team leader (OTL) if the letter from the medical professional states the customer has a short term disability or illness and may be able to attend an interview in the future.

You, the OTL must:

1. Check the details of the person who signed the letter and their position with external reference sources.
2. Assess the information provided on a case by case basis (consulting with the Quality, Examination Support team (QuEST) if necessary). If the disability, illness or hospitalisation is short term the application can be put on hold until the customer recovers or is able to attend.
3. Add a case note to the application to record your decision and advise the examiner of their next step, for example, to:
 - tell the customer if they are eligible to take someone with them as support at the interview
 - store the application until the customer is able to attend an interview, based on the medical professional's assessment (this will mean placing the application on hold in Digital Application Processing (DAP) every 7 days)
4. Return the application to the examiner to complete the application.

If we have already asked the customer to attend an interview you the OTL must:

1. Recall the application on DAP or Application Management System (AMS).
2. Tell the customer by telephone or letter they must attend an interview when they are well enough.

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, virtual (MS Teams) or a Video Interview Service (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 interviews 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.

Virtual interviews

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we may need to interview the customer virtually using MS Teams.

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 MS Teams 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 arrange the VIS interview when the customer contacts them after being invited to interview. 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 meet with us using MS Teams or travel to an interview for an overseas application.

CBT will update the processing system 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 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 or tell us they are able to 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
- New Zealand
- the United States of America

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

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