



Home Office

Confirming ID: referees

Version 25.0

His Majesty's Passport Office guidance about referees (who can confirm a customer's identity and how they do this).

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About: Confirming ID: referees

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff:

- about the purpose of a person who confirms a customer identity
- about the criteria to be a person, who confirms a customer's identity
- when staff may use discretion (when examining a person who confirms a customer identity)

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 **25.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **4 December 2024**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to:

- tell examiners what to do if the referee does not correctly certify the customer's paper photo
- confirm a person cannot apply on behalf of a customer and act as their referee on the same application, see: Referee and person applying are the same: third party
- confirm examiners must ask for a referee if they change the customer's details or the application type to one which makes a referee mandatory (for example, for a child under 12 or to replace a lost, damaged or stolen passport)
- remove reference to transferring to AMS (Application Management System) and Document Management Service
- tell examiners what to do when DAP shows a **Referee required for application type** task
- confirm Irish passport holders can now complete the online referee process when the customer applies from the UK

Related content

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What a referee is and why we need them

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff, what a referee is, and why and when we need a referee.

We use the term referee in guidance to refer to a person who is confirming a customer's identity however, guidance for customers may use different terminology.

A customer will be asked to provide a:

- [digital referee](#) when they apply using the Digital Customer Service (DCS) channel
- [paper referee \(using a paper 1 page form\)](#) when they apply using the DCS channel and cannot provide a digital referee
- [paper referee \(countersignature\)](#) when they apply using a paper SE04 or OS application form

Customer guidance may refer to the referee on a paper form as the 'countersignatory' but in this guidance we call this person the countersignature.

Why we need a referee

We ask referees to confirm the customer's photo is a true likeness and corroborate (countersign) their personal details on the passport application. Referees help us to:

- confirm a customer's identity
- confirm the information given by the customer is true (to the best of their knowledge)
- maintain the integrity of the British passport
- safeguard (protect) vulnerable customers
- prevent passport fraud

To help us identify and prevent fraud we will complete standard identity checks to:

- check the referee's identity
- confirm the identity of the customer

We will tell the customer they need to provide a referee when they make their application. Sometimes we will ask the customer to get a referee during processing (for example, because their appearance has changed since we issued their old passport).

When we need a referee

If a customer is applying for a British passport, our customer guidance asks them to provide a referee, when they:

- apply for their first adult passport
- replace their adult passport that has been damaged, lost or stolen
- apply for a child's first passport
- renew a child passport (for children under the age of 12)
- replace a child passport that has been damaged, lost or stolen

See [Who can be a referee](#), for the criteria to be a digital referee, paper referee (1 page form) and paper referee (countersignature).

There are instances [when a customer does not provide a referee](#) but we must ask the customer for one. For example:

- where we change the application type to one where a referee is mandatory (for example a child under 12 or to replace a lost, damaged or stolen passport)
- if you (the examiner) are unable to identify the customer from passport records because you cannot identify the customer from their photo on the previous passport record

When we need a digital referee

DCS (Digital Customer Service) uses the personal information provided by the customer to:

- decide if they need to provide a digital referee in line with [When we need a referee](#)
- direct them to provide a digital referee

If DCS decides the customer must provide a digital referee, they will not be able to proceed through the DCS journey without a digital referee confirming their identity online, unless they provide a paper referee ((1 page form), see below) instead.

When we need a paper referee (1 page form)

DCS will tell the customer to provide a paper referee (1 page form) if the customer applies using DCS, but cannot find someone to be a digital referee, or their referee does not meet the online criteria.

When we need a paper referee (countersignature)

We will ask the customer to provide a paper referee (countersignature) when they complete an SE04 or OS paper form and they:

- meet the criteria in line with [When we need a referee](#)

- renew their adult passport and their appearance has changed or we cannot recognise them from their current passport
- renew a child passport (for children aged 12 to 15) and their appearance has changed or we cannot recognise them from their current passport

We may also need a paper referee (countersignature) when the confirming identity checks guidance tells you to ask for one.

Related content

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When a customer does not provide a referee

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff, what to do when a customer does not provide a referee to confirm their identity.

You, the examiner, must ask the customer for a referee when they do not provide one and they are applying:

- for their first British passport (child or adult)
- to replace a British passport that has been damaged, lost or stolen (child or adult)
- to renew a British passport for a child under 12

It is a mandatory requirement for the customer to nominate a referee for these case types and you must ask for one if a referee has not been provided. This includes where you have amended application details or the application type which means the customer must now provide a referee.

For other application types, if a customer has not nominated a referee, you must ask the customer to provide one. For example, when you:

- are unable to identify the customer from passport records because:
 - there is no photo of the customer on the previous passport record; or,
 - you cannot identify the customer from their photo on the previous passport record
- change the application type on the system for the application to a first time or replacement application where a referee is mandatory; for example when:
 - the customer applies to renew their passport (and does not provide a referee) but later finds they have lost it or it is lost in transit and you must change the service type to replacement
- need a referee for a child under 12 (because a referee is mandatory for children under 12 years old regardless of application type). For example, you must request a referee if:
 - the customer puts the wrong date of birth on the child's renewal application and when you correct the error it changes their age on the application from over 12 years to under 12 years old
- need to replace a current referee who is unacceptable

If the application has no referee and you are using the Digital Application Processing (DAP) system, you must select the option to request a referee using the task telling you the application type has changed.

A [referee](#) is important in confirming identity, they independently help us to confirm the information on an application provided by the customer, whether it is by selecting 'YES' or 'NO' or signing the 1 page referee form or section 10 on a paper form. This

information is important to acknowledge and help us identify potential fraud or vulnerability issues relating to the customer that require further action.

For example, on a child's application, the referee is confirming:

- they recognise the child in the photo
- can link the child to the name and address provided
- the parent's details for parental responsibility and nationality claims are correct to the best of their knowledge

Depending on the referee's response, the application may need to be referred to Child Protection and Safeguarding (CPST) team because of safeguarding concerns.

If you have no fraud or safeguarding concerns and guidance confirms you do not need a referee (for example, the customer is over the age of 12, you have no fraud or safeguarding concerns and you can clearly identify the customer from passport records), you must explain your decision in a case note on the application.

Referee required for application type task

Where you have amended application details or the application type which means the customer must now provide a referee, DAP will create a **Referee required for application type** task.

This task will appear for paper applications only; however, the information applies to all applications received.

You must ask for a referee unless other guidance tells you that you can apply an exception to not request one. For example, the application is:

- linked to a Crisis situation where changes to checks and interventions have been made and agreed as part of the crisis response
- to correct error on a passport, see:
 - a referee is not required on a new application
 - a referee is required on a new application

The task will show you:

- how the customer applied (by paper or online), shown under the title **Medium**
- if the system shows **false** under the **Referee Details Present**

To deal with this task, you must:

1. Look to see if the application is to correct error on a passport and if:
 - a referee is not required on a new application
 - a referee is required on a new application
2. Look to see if the application is not to correct an error or meets an exemption confirmed in other guidance. If it does, follow the [when a customer does not](#)

[provide a referee](#) section of this guidance to confirm if you must ask the customer to nominate a referee.

3. Decide if you:
 - must ask the customer to nominate a referee to confirm the customer's identity
 - need to refer for investigation
 - can clear this task to continue to process the application because guidance tells you the application does not need a referee
 - need to ask for documents and send the customer an email using the Comms Builder
 - want to withdraw the application
 - want to delay your decision on this task if you are contacting the customer on another task to ask for information or documents
4. Add a case note to show the actions and decisions you made.
5. Complete the task.

Related content

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Who can be a referee

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about the criteria to be a referee (a person who can confirm a customer's identity).

A referee must be 18 years old or over and be:

- someone of 'good standing' in the community and who
 - has personally known the customer for at least 2 years
 - works in a [recognised profession](#) (or who has retired from one)
 - will lose something, if they falsely countersign an application (for example, it will have a negative impact on their life if they made a false declaration)
 - has a passport we can use to check their identity
- able to confirm the:
 - customer's identity
 - customer's photo is a true likeness
 - information the customer gives on the application is true and correct, to the best of their knowledge
- able to confirm a child's identity (for their application), the:
 - identity of the person making the application on the child's behalf
 - identity of the child
 - relationship between the person making the application and the child
- able to, if a third party makes an application on the customer's behalf, confirm the:
 - identity of the third party that is making the application
 - identity of the person who the passport is for
 - relationship between the third party and the customer

Who can be a referee for a customer applying from the UK

A referee for a customer who applies in the UK, must:

- live in the UK
- pass our automatic identity checks (if they are a digital referee)
- complete the 1 page form (if they are a paper referee (1 page form))
- complete section 10 of the SE04 (if they are a paper referee (countersignature))
- hold a current and valid (unexpired and uncanceled):
 - British passport, recorded on our electronic passport records (this includes any variant type passport or British nationality); or
 - Irish passport

Who can be a referee for a customer applying from overseas

A referee for a customer who applies from overseas, must:

- live in the UK or overseas (this does not need to be the same country as the customer)
- pass our automatic identity checks (if they are a digital referee)
- complete the 1 page form (if they are a paper referee (1 page form))
- complete section 10 of the OS form (if they are a paper referee (countersignature))

They must hold (in order of preference), a current and valid (unexpired and uncanceled):

- British passport recorded on our electronic passport records (this includes any variant type passport or British nationality)
- Irish passport
- European Union passport
- United States passport
- [Commonwealth](#) passport

Referee: automatic identity checks

If someone agrees to be a referee, they agree for us to run automatic identity checks on the information they give.

Referee: recognised professions

A referee must work in (or be retired from) a recognised profession. However, you can apply discretion under certain circumstances, if needed (for example, if the person is not currently in employment)

This following list gives an example of recognised professions. It is not a complete list, and if the customer provides a referee with a similar profession, you must consider them in line with the overall requirements:

- accountant
- airline pilot
- articulated clerk of a limited company
- assurance agent of a recognised company
- bank or building society official
- barrister
- chairman or director of a [limited company](#)
- chiropodist
- commissioner of oaths
- councillor (for example a local or county councillor)
- civil servant
- dentist
- director, manager, or personnel officer of a vat registered company
- doctor
- driving instructor (must be listed on the [register of Approved Driving Instructors](#))
- engineer (with professional qualifications)

- fire service official
- funeral director
- financial services intermediary
- insurance agent (full time) of a recognised company
- journalist
- justice of the peace
- legal secretary (fellow or associate members of the Institute of Legal Secretaries and PAs)
- licensee of a public house
- local government officer
- manager or personnel officer of a limited company
- minister of a recognised religion (including Christian Science)
- MP's
- nurse, registered mental health nurse (RMN) or registered general nurse (RGN)
- officers of the armed forces
- optician
- paralegal (certified paralegals, qualified paralegal and associate members of the institute of paralegals)
- person with honours (for example, an OBE or MBE)
- photographer (professional)
- police officer
- post office official
- president or secretary of a recognised organisation
- Salvation Army officer
- social worker
- solicitor
- surveyor
- teacher or lecturer
- trade union official
- travel agent (must hold a professional travel agent qualification)
- valuers and auctioneers (fellow and associate members of the incorporated society)

Referee: related to the customer

The person confirming identity must declare their relationship to the customer, and some may tell us they are related to the customer. Customers are told their referee cannot be related to them when they make their application.

We can accept a relationship between a customer and referee, if they are friends, family friends or a relative's friend or partner (for example, the referee is the partner of the customer's sister or cousin).

If the person has described their relationship as 'godparent', they can be accepted if they are not related or a close family member.

You must reject a referee if they and the customer are:

- related by birth, adoption, marriage, civil partnership or divorce or a member of their close family (for example, siblings, in laws, cousins, step-parents, step-siblings or step-grandparents)
- in a relationship or partnership similar to marriage (for example partners, whether or not they live together)

If it is unclear how a referee is related to the customer, you must call them to find out the relationship, before you decide if you can accept or reject them.

Referee: professions and relationships we cannot accept

A person cannot confirm a customer's identity if they are:

- living at the same address or [related](#)
- a [third party](#) who is also the person applying for a passport on behalf of the intended passport holder
- a doctor or General Practitioner (GP), unless they know the customer well (for example, they are a friend, not a patient)
- an overseas agent helping the customer with their application (for example, a solicitor or commissioner of oaths)
- [HM Passport Office staff](#) or contractors currently working for HM Passport Office
- [UK Visas and Immigration staff \(UKVI\)](#), dealing with applications for British citizenship or right of abode in the UK
- [a civil servant](#), providing a service on behalf of HM Passport Office
- [Sopra Steria Ltd. staff](#), providing a service on behalf of HM Passport Office

Acting as a referee: civil service staff

Civil servants can act as a referee for an application. However, if they are a civil servant who currently provides a service on behalf of HM Passport Office, they are not acceptable. For example, they are working as part of a surge team at the time of the customer's application. This is because they can influence the outcome of an application.

Civil servants who are not providing a service on behalf of HM Passport Office can act as a referee (for example, Immigration Enforcement or Border Force colleagues fulfilling their standard roles). If you need to confirm the person's role you must phone them (for example, if they have just stated 'Home Office').

You, the examiner, must refer an application to your operational team leader (OTL), if the customer's identity has been confirmed, by:

- HM Passport Office staff
- UK Visas and Immigration staff dealing with applications for British citizenship or right of abode in the UK
- someone who is providing a service on behalf of HM Passport Office, from:
 - HM Revenue and Customs

- Local Service or Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) (unless the application is from a prisoner held overseas and they have personal knowledge of the individual)
- the Home Office, for example a member of the Passport or Nationality Policy team
- UK Visas and Immigration
- any other Home Office staff who are instructed they must not act in this capacity, in line with the Human Resources personal conduct guidance

If any of the above are a referee on a British passport application, you, the OTL, must:

- speak to the member of staff's line manager to find out why they countersigned the application
- reject them as a referee, and ask the customer for a new one

If you are the OTL dealing with the member of staff who has acted as a referee on a British passport application, you must consider whether you need to follow disciplinary procedures in line with the HR personal conduct guidance (for example, if they have been told before they must not countersign).

If you suspect fraud, you must refer the member of staff to the HO Security Central Referrals team who will refer them to the Professional Standards Unit (PSU).

Acting as a referee: supplier staff

If a person works for our supplier, Sopra Steria Ltd. and provide a service on behalf of HM Passport Office, they are not acceptable. For example, they are working as part of the Document Handling Unit at the time of the customer's application.

If they have confirmed a customer's identity, you, the examiner, must reject them as a referee, and ask the customer for a new one.

You may accept a person who works for a partner organization, (for example Post Office and Royal Mail) if they meet the criteria to act as a referee on an application. This is because they are not:

- able to influence the outcome of an application
- are not at the same risk of being sought out by criminals

Related content

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How a digital referee confirms a customer's identity

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how a person confirms a customer's identity when they are applying for a British passport online (using DCS (Digital Customer Services)).

A person confirming a customer's identity online using the Digital Customer Service (DCS) channel is called a digital referee. They must meet the [criteria to confirm a customer's identity](#).

You (the examiner) must examine the digital referee if there is one provided on the customer's application.

Digital referees can be examined using the Application Management System (AMS) or Digital Application Processing (DAP).

How a digital referee completes an application

On an adult's application, DCS asks the digital referee to confirm the customer's:

- photo (for example, if it is a true likeness)
- address

On a child's application, DCS asks the digital referee to confirm:

- the parents' details
- if a child's photo is a true likeness
- the customer's address (and the child's link to it)
- if the person making the child's application has the right authority
- the child's place of birth

Digital referee: confirm the photo is a true likeness

DCS will show the referee a photo of the child or adult customer and ask them to confirm if it is a true likeness of the person named on the application. The referee must answer 'yes' or 'no'. If they answer 'no', they must provide a reason why.

There are 4 reasons why a referee may not be able to confirm if the photo is a true likeness:

- they recognise the photo but not the customer's name
- they know a person by that name but cannot identify the customer from the photo
- they recognise the photo but know the customer by another name

- they do not know the customer's name and do not recognise their photo

Digital referee: confirming the customer's address

DCS will show the referee the customer's address and ask them to confirm if it is correct. If the application is for a child DCS will also ask the referee to confirm the child is linked to that address.

The referee must answer 'yes' or 'no'.

Digital referee: confirm parents' details on a child application

DCS will show the digital referee the details of the child's parents and ask them to confirm if they are correct. The referee must answer 'yes' or 'no'.

A referee may not be able to confirm the identity of the child's parents because:

- the referee has no knowledge of or are unable to confirm either parent
- one of the parent's details are missing
- the parents' details are incorrect (for example, their name)

Digital referee: confirm the person applying for a child

DCS will show the digital referee the details of the person making the application for a child and will ask them to confirm the relationship between the person making the application and the child (for example 'relationship to applicant – mother'). The digital referee must answer 'yes' or 'no'.

A digital referee may not be able to confirm the relationship between the person making the application and the child, because they:

- do not know the person making the application and their link to the child
- do not know or believe the person making the application has a relationship to the child

Digital referee: confirm a child's place of birth

DCS will show the referee the child's place of birth and ask them to confirm if it is correct. The referee must answer 'yes' or 'no'.

A referee may not be able to confirm a child's place of birth, because they:

- do not know the child's place of birth
- know the child was not born in that location

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How a paper referee (1 page form) confirms a customer's identity

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how a person confirms a customer's identity when they are applying for a British passport using the paper referee (1 page) process when the customer completes their application using the Digital Customer Service (DCS).

A person confirming a customer's identity using the one-page referee form is called a paper referee (1 page form). They must meet the [criteria to confirm a customer's identity](#). They must have signed and dated the form within the last 6 months.

Sometimes a customer's digital referee will meet the [online criteria](#), but:

- cannot pass our [automated identity checks](#)
- has problems logging into the system to complete the process

If this happens, they can still be the customer's referee, using the paper referee (1 page form) process. To do this, the referee must ask the customer for a paper referee (1 page form) form and complete it. The customer must then send the form back to us to complete the application process.

Customers can get a paper referee (1 page form) (examples are here) by:

- downloading and printing it themselves from Digital Customer Service (DCS), by logging into their application
- phoning the Contact Centre to ask the examiner to send them one (but only if the application is already on AMS (Application Management System))

For a child's application the paper referee (1 page form) must confirm information about the child and parents, by completing:

- the 1 page form downloaded from DCS (which contains all the information, including the parents' details)
- both the 1 page form and a written response to letter 920, if the 1 page form was printed from AMS (because forms printed from AMS do not include the parents' details)

You (the examiner) must examine the paper referee (1 page form) if there is one provided on the customer's application.

Paper referees (1 page form) can be examined using the Application Management System (AMS) or Digital Application Processing (DAP).

How a paper referee (1 page form) completes an application

We will ask the paper referee completing the 1 page form to:

- give their full name, full address, profession and contact details
- give their current passport number
- tell us how many years they have known the customer
- give the date they signed the application
- sign the declaration (inside the box)
- put their initials next to any mistakes they may make

The paper referee (1 page form) must confirm the:

- customer's photo is a true likeness
- customer's address
- parents' details (for child applications)
- person applying for the child (for child applications)
- place of birth (for child applications)

Paper referee (1 page form): sending the 1 page form to a customer from AMS

We can only send the customer a paper referee (1 page form) if the application is already on AMS. You must not transfer an application from DAP to AMS because the customer wants to use a 1-page form, the customer must download one from their tracking page on DCS.

If a customer asks us to send them a paper referee (1 page form) form the Contact Centre will transfer the customer to CSMT (if the application is on AMS).

The system will create a case note on AMS to tell you, the examiner, to send the customer a paper referee (1 page form) form.

When you receive the application, you must:

1. Clear the system warning saying, 'Application has been countersigned without the completion of the declaration'.
2. Send the customer the paper referee (1 page form) form (which you can print from AMS using the **Print Csig form** button) and send letter 920 if the application is for a child.

The customer will send their documents with the completed paper referee (1 page form) form, to the address written on the letter that will come with the form.

Paper referee (1 page form): form cannot be scanned on AMS

If we get a paper referee (1 page form) form that SSL (Sopra Steria Ltd) cannot scan on to AMS, SSL will:

1. Add a case note to say 'unscannable csig form'.
2. Send the application to examination.

When you, the examiner processing on AMS, get the application, you must:

1. Tell the customer we received their paper referee (1 page form) form but could not scan it on our system.
2. Send the customer a new paper referee (1 page form) form (which you can print from AMS using the Print Csig form button) and ask them to fill it in.
3. Re-send letter 920 if we have not received a reply to our original letter (if the application is for a child).

Related content

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How a paper referee (countersignature) confirms a customer's identity

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how a person confirms a customer's identity when they are applying for a British passport using a paper application form (an SE04 or OS application form).

A person confirming a customer's identity using a paper SE04 or OS application form is called a paper referee (countersignature). They must meet the [criteria to confirm a customer's identity](#).

Paper referee (countersignature) forms can be examined using the Application Management System (AMS) or Digital Application Processing (DAP).

How a paper referee (countersignature) completes an application

A paper referee (countersignature) must complete section 10 of the paper SE04 or OS application form, after the customer has completed all the other sections. We will ask the paper referee (countersignature) to:

- give their full name, full address, profession and contact details
- give their current passport number
- give the years they have known the customer
- give the date they signed the application
- sign inside the box
- put their initials next to any mistakes they may make

How a paper referee (countersignature) confirms a customer's photo

The certification (signature) on the back of the photo must confirm the photo is a true likeness of the person named and match the name on the customer's application.

A paper referee (countersignature) must sign 1 of the photos the customer sends with their application. On the back of the photo, the paper referee (countersignature) must:

- write a statement to say: 'I certify that this is a true likeness of Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms or title [full name of customer]'
- sign and date it (under the statement)

For legal reasons, we must not accept 'true likeness' certifications on a separate piece of paper, even if it is attached to the back of a photo.

Related content

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When you must examine a referee

This section tells HM Passport Office staff when to examine a digital referee, paper referee (1 page form) and a paper referee (countersignature).

Depending on the type of referee the customer has provided, you may or may not need to examine the referee. However, you must always examine the referee if the application is for a first time passport, a replacement passport or for a child under the age of 12.

When you must examine a referee: digital referee or paper referee (1 page form)

The Digital Customer Service (DCS) channel will tell the customer to provide a referee based on the customer's information and type of application, see: [When we need a referee](#).

You must always examine a digital referee or paper referee (1 page form), when the customer applies using DCS, if one is provided. For example, even if you can identify the customer from our records, or the customer is attending interview.

This is because we ask the referee to confirm the information provided by the customer on an application by selecting 'YES' or 'NO' or by signing the 1 page form. This information is important to acknowledge, as further action may be required.

If the customer has not provided a digital referee or paper referee (1 page form), see [When a customer does not provide a referee](#).

When you must examine a paper referee (countersignature)

Our customer guidance tells the customer when they need to provide a paper referee (countersignature).

However, we may not always need to examine the paper referee (countersignature), even when the customer has provided one. See: [When not to examine a paper referee \(countersignature\)](#).

You must always examine the paper referee (countersignature), if the:

- application is for a first-time passport
- customer is applying to renew their old passport and either:
 - you cannot identify them from the photo on their previous passport record when you compare it to the one on the application
 - the previous passport record on our records does not have a photo

- customer has asked us to deliver to a different address and they are a child or vulnerable adult
- application meets the criteria in this guidance

If the customer has not provided a paper referee (countersignature), see [When a customer does not provide a referee](#).

If you have referred the application to CFT (Counter Fraud Team) and they return the application to you with a case note showing 'No CFT interest', you must examine the paper referee (countersignature) if this guidance confirms you must.

When not to examine a paper referee (countersignature)

You must not use this section if you are dealing with an application submitted:

- for a child under 12
- to replace a passport (child or adult)
- using the Digital Customer Service (DCS) channel (these have either a digital referee or paper referee (1 page form)), even if the application is transferred to AMS

When a customer provides a [paper referee \(countersignature\)](#) on their application, we may not always need to examine their information. However, you must always examine the referee on any first time or replacement passport applications and any application type for a child under 12 years of age.

You must decide if you can continue with the application without examining the paper referee (countersignature) if:

- the application is to renew a child (over the age of 12) or adult passport and you can clearly identify the customer from the photo on the previous passport record when you compare it to the one on the application
- the application is a joint application with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)
- CFT have investigated an application and added a case note to show, 'Identity (ID) not in doubt'

Before you decide not to examine the paper referee (countersignature), you must make sure:

- you consider the application as a whole, considering all the facts, before you make a decision
- you have confirmed the customer's identity, there are no risk indicators and the application can continue without a paper referee (countersignature)
- the name on the back of the certified photo matches the name on the application

Referee: fraud or safeguarding concerns

You, the examiner, must complete additional checks (on DAP (Digital Application Processing)) or refer the application to an Enhanced Application Checking (EAC) examiner (on AMS (Application Management System)), if:

- you have fraud concerns with the application; or,
- the referee tells us that they do not know the customer; or,
- 2 or more referees do not respond to 2 letters, asking for more information; or,
- the referee cannot confirm a vulnerable customer's change of delivery address; or,
- the referee's passport is:
 - stolen
 - lost in the post
 - lost or unavailable

You must refer the application to the CFT, if:

- you complete additional or EAC checks and still have concerns; or,
- you have any safeguarding (for example, child protection) concerns; or,
- the referee's passport number belongs to a deceased passport holder

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How to check a referee is acceptable

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners how to check a referee who has confirmed a customer's identity is acceptable for the purposes of British passport applications.

If you (the examiner) have an application with a digital referee, paper referee (1 page form), or paper referee (countersignature) confirming the customer's identity, you must decide if:

- they meet [the criteria](#) to be a referee
- you need to use discretion because they do not quite meet the full criteria
- the application meets any risk indicators, or you have concerns with the referee

We check a referee to make sure they are fulfilling their role correctly, see [why we need a referee](#). Part of this process includes checking the validity of their current passport.

If, during the processing of a customer's application but after they have confirmed a customer's identity, a referee's passport is cancelled or declared lost or stolen, we must complete further checks.

We do this, because we need to be sure they are the person who completed that section. For example, did the person named as the customer's referee complete the application or was it a third party who knew the person's passport number.

Referee and customer's details are the same

You must check the surname, email address and phone number of a customer and the referee confirming their identity. This is to make sure they are not the same person, or it is not a family member.

If the phone number or email address are the same, you must reject the referee confirming the customer's identity and ask the customer for a new referee to confirm their identity.

Third parties acting as referees

A third party applying for a passport on the intended passport holder's behalf cannot also act as their referee.

For example, the intended passport holder is unable to apply for themselves and a solicitor completes the application and acts as their referee as well.

If the same person has applied for the passport and confirmed the customer's identity, you must reject them as a referee, and ask the customer for a new one.

Checking a referee's signature: digital or paper referee (1 page form)

You do not have to compare a digital referee or paper referee (1 page form) signature with:

- passport records, if they are a British passport holder because it does not show one
- [the Irish Passport Checking service](#), if they are an Irish passport holder because it does not show one

If they are an EU, US, or Commonwealth passport holder, they are told to provide a colour photocopy of their passport. If they are a:

- digital referee, you cannot compare their signature, but you must check the colour photocopy of their passport matches the details provided on the application
- paper referee (1 page form), you must compare their signature on the 1 page form with the one on the colour photocopy of their passport (if their foreign passport includes their signature)

Checking a referee's signature: paper referee (countersignature)

If you have an application with a paper referee (countersignature) and you are [using them to prove the customer's identity](#), you must check the paper referee (countersignature)'s signature on the paper application form against the signature on the customer's photo.

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns about the paper referee (countersignature)'s signature, you must compare their signature on the application form and photos to the one on their passport.

If the paper referee (countersignature) is:

- a British passport holder, you must:
 - check passport records (you can use their old passport record if their current passport record does not include a signature)
 - ask for more information, if their signature does not exist on passport records, to prove their signature is genuine (see Confirming identity: checking a signature is genuine)
- an Irish passport holder, you must:
 - [complete a check of their Irish passport](#)
 - ask for more information to prove their signature is genuine (see Confirming identity: checking a signature is genuine)
- an EU, US, or Commonwealth passport holder, they are told to provide a colour photocopy of their passport, you must compare their signature on the form with

the one on the colour photocopy of their passport (if their passport includes their signature)

- if their passport does not include their signature, you must ask for more information to prove their signature is genuine (see Confirming identity: checking a signature is genuine)

Checking a referee's British passport

A referee with a British passport must provide their name and British passport number on the application so the system can check it against our passport records.

Checking a British passport: digital referee

If you have a digital referee, their British passport has already been checked by our systems.

A digital referee cannot continue the online process to confirm a customer's identity, if:

- the system cannot find their British passport number on our records
- their passport is recorded as expired or cancelled on passport records

However, the referee's passport may become expired or cancelled after we receive the application, and you must follow the guidance for [expired](#) or [cancelled](#) referee passports.

Checking a British passport: paper referee (1 page form or countersignature)

A paper referee's (1 page form or countersignature) British passport is not checked against our systems until the form they have completed is scanned onto the system.

You must do a manual check of passport records if the system does not automatically complete the checks on the referee's British passport or the referee's details are missing or incorrect.

If you are dealing with a paper reference on DAP, after you have confirmed the referee details you must [edit the referee's details](#) if they are missing or incorrect to show the correct details and case note your actions.

Checking a referee's British passport: passport is expired

If the referee's British passport is expired:

- DAP will display this in the referee task
- AMS will generate a warning

DAP will not highlight the expiry date, if the referee:

- has renewed their passport within 3 weeks of the customer's application
- is a digital referee, because their passport has already been checked by DCS

You can accept a referee if the referee's British passport expired after they confirmed a customer's identity. This means their passport expired:

- after they completed their details online, if they are a digital referee
- after the date they completed (dated) the paper form, if they are a paper referee (1 page form or countersignature)

If the referee's passport was expired at the time they confirmed the customer's identity, you must check passport records to see if the referee has applied for a new passport. If our records shows the referee:

- has not applied, you must ask the customer for a new referee
- has submitted an application, follow the guidance for [referee's passport is cancelled](#)

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must:

- complete additional checks (if you are processing on DAP)
- refer it to an Enhanced Application Checking (EAC) examiner (if you are processing on AMS)

Checking a referee's British passport: passport is not current or valid

If the referee's British passport has been cancelled on passport records:

- DAP will show a **Referee's passport is not current or valid** task (DAP will not show the task, if the referee's passport is cancelled because they have renewed the passport within 3 weeks of the customer's application)
- AMS will generate a warning

When you see this task or warning you must check to see when and why the referee's passport has been cancelled, for example, the referee:

- may have had their passport renewed or replaced since providing their details as referee
- may no longer have required an additional passport (if it was a diplomatic, official or second passport)
- is deceased
- has had their passport cancelled in error
- is no longer entitled to a British passport
- has had their passport revoked for other reasons

You must ask the customer for a new referee, if the referee's passport was cancelled at the time they confirmed the customer's identity.

If the passport was current and valid (uncancelled and unexpired) when the referee confirmed the customer's identity, but it is now cancelled, you must check passport records to see:

- the reason why it has been cancelled
- if they have had a new one issued, is it issued in the same identity

You can accept the referee if our records shows they have not applied to replace the cancelled passport and there are no fraud or safeguarding concerns. For example, the passport was cancelled in error, or the referee no longer requires a second passport.

However, if our records shows the referee has had a new passport issued, you must:

1. Check passport records to see if the passport declared on the application, and the new passport, are issued in the same identity (for example, check the referee's details and their photo).
2. Refer the application for investigation if the passport records show different identities.
3. Contact the referee by phone to confirm their current passport number, if the records show the same person (only use a letter 201, if you cannot contact them by phone).

If the referee tells us their new passport number, you must:

- check the new passport number matches our records; and
- compare the photos on their new passport record to the photo on their old passport records to see if you can identify them from the photos

If you can identify them from the photos on passport records, you must:

- case note the new passport number and how you confirmed this; and
- clear the task or warning

If the referee tells us they are still waiting to receive their new passport as they have applied to renew it, you must put the application on hold and contact them again when they have received it.

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, for example the referee's passport was cancelled because they are not entitled to a British passport, you must refer the application to investigation.

Checking a referee's British passport: passport is reported lost or stolen

If the referee's British passport is lost or stolen on passport records:

- DAP will show a **Referee's passport is reported lost or stolen** task
- AMS will generate a warning

If the referee's passport was lost or stolen at the time they confirmed the customer's identity, you must ask the customer for a new referee. If the customer contacts us to tell us the referee now has a valid passport (for example, they have replaced it) you can follow the guidance for [referee's passport is cancelled](#).

If the referee's British passport was current and valid (uncancelled and unexpired) when they confirmed the customer's identity, but the passport has since been reported lost or stolen, you must check passport records to see if the referee has made an application to replace the passport.

If records shows the referee:

- has not made an application to replace the passport, you must send the referee letter 201 and ask them to confirm their current passport number. When the referee responds and confirms their passport is:
 - lost or stolen, you can accept them (because the referee met our requirements at the time the application was made)
 - not lost or stolen, you must ask the customer for a new referee
- has made an application to replace the passport, you must check passport records to see if the passport declared on the application, and the new passport, are issued in the same identity (for example, check the referee's details and their photo). If the identities are:
 - the same, you can accept the referee if there are no fraud or safeguarding concerns with the referee or the application; you do not need to contact the referee or wait for their new passport to be issued
 - different, you must refer the application

If the referee tells us their new passport number, you must:

- check the new passport number matches passport records; and
- compare the photos on their new passport record to the photo on their old passport records to see if you can identify them from the photos

If you can identify them from the photos on passport records you must:

- case note the new passport number and how you confirmed this; and
- clear the task or warning

If the referee tells us they are still waiting to receive their new passport as they have applied to replace it, you must put the application on hold and contact them again when they have received it.

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must refer the application for investigation.

Checking a British passport: no trace in our records

If you have an application where you cannot find the referee's British passport on passport records:

- AMS will generate a warning
- DAP will show a **No trace of Referee's passport** task

You must:

1. Carry out confirming identity checks on the customer and referee.
2. Check we can [accept the referee confirming the customer identity](#).
3. Contact the referee confirming the customer's identity to ask for their passport number (if the results show no signs of fraud). Only use a letter 201, if you cannot contact them by phone.

If the referee responds with new or different passport details and you can confirm them on passport records, you must:

- case note the passport number and how you confirmed this; and
- clear the task or warning
- follow the adding records to MI guidance to add the passport record

Checking a referee's Irish passport

If you have an application where the referee is an Irish passport holder, you must check the details on the application match the details on the Irish Passport Checking service (for example, name and passport number). You must do this even if the customer sends a photocopy of the referee's Irish passport.

To use the Irish Passport Checking service, you must:

1. Access the Irish Passport Checking service.
2. Enter the referee's:
 - passport number
 - first forename (do not enter any middle names, apostrophes, or wild cards)
 - surname
3. Select check referee.

You will be able to identify the referee's passport may be Irish because:

- the customer will not have sent a photocopy of the referee's details page for their passport (because we do not ask for this when they hold an Irish passport)
- the passport number will start with a P or L, followed by another letter and 7 digits (for example, PA1234567)

When you have completed your checks, you must:

- add a case note confirming the checks you made and your decision

- still complete any other checks necessary (for example, checking they are qualified to act as a referee)

Checking a referee's non-British or non-Irish passport

If you have an application where the referee is a non-British or non-Irish passport holder they must send a colour photocopy of the personal details page of their European Union, United States or Commonwealth passport. They must send this with the customer's British passport application or at our request (if we contact them).

You must check the details (for example name and passport number) on the application match the colour photocopy of the personal details page of their passport.

If the details do not match or they do not include them, you must ask the referee for them:

- using the task on DAP (Digital Application Processing)
- by sending letter 201 on AMS (Application Management System)

Referee cannot provide a colour photocopy

If the referee cannot provide a colour photocopy of their non-British passport, you must raise a guidance query.

The Quality, Examiner Support team will refer these to Passport Policy, who will:

- decide if you can accept the black and white photocopy of the referee's passport
- assess if there are issues with referees from certain countries providing colour photocopies of their non-British passport

Referee colour photocopy: after the application

When a referee sends us a photocopy of their passport, to support a customer's application, we must destroy the photocopy.

If the application is on DAP, you must update the instructions on Application Receive Domain (ARD) to tell the Document Handling Unit (DHU) the copy must be destroyed.

Checking a referee's passport: passport in a different name

If the referee's current passport shows a different name to the referee's name on the application, you must consider if it is a different:

- surname (or minor change of name)
- person

If it is a different surname (or minor change of name) you must [contact the referee](#), and ask if there has been a change of name. If they can explain the change of name (for example, marriage) and all checks are clear, you must:

- accept their response; and
- add a case note confirming their response, your checks and decisions
- [edit the referee's details](#) if you are processing a paper reference task on DAP

If it is a different person, you must check the passport number on the application is the same number you are checking on the system. If the passport number is:

- not the same, you must change the incorrect number on the system and do the checks again
- the same, you must [contact the referee](#) to confirm the correct passport number

If the referee responds with:

- a different passport number, you must change the incorrect number on the system and do the checks again

If they respond with the same passport number, you must:

- refer to an EAC examiner to do further checks if you are working on AMS
- complete additional checks if you are working on DAP

Checking a referee's address

A referee is asked to provide an address they can be contacted at when confirming a customer's identity. This can be a home or work address. Before you accept a referee, you may need to check the address they gave us.

If you are dealing with a paper reference on DAP and the address is incorrect, you must [edit the referee's details](#) to show the correct details and case note your actions.

When the referee has provided a:

- business address, you can check their details (for example their company name and address) on third party reference sources, such as 192.com, Yell.com and larger company websites
- home address and they hold a British passport, you can use passport records to see if they used the same address for their passport application

Contacting a teacher during school holidays

If you need to contact a referee who is a teacher during the [school holidays](#) and they have given their work address, you must:

1. Contact the customer by phone.
2. Explain you cannot contact the teacher during the school holidays, as they will not have access to the email or letter.
3. Explain the customer can either:
 - ask a new person to be their referee, for the application to continue
 - have their application put on hold until the school holidays end, and we can contact the teacher

When you get the new referee, you must contact them by email or letter (to progress the application).

If you need to contact a referee who is a teacher during the [school holidays](#) and they have given their home address, you can continue to contact them using this information.

Checking a referee's profession

Before you accept a referee you must make sure they have a [recognised profession for passport purposes](#). The person provides this information on the application (for example, their job title, position in the community, profession, or professional qualifications).

The list of recognised professions is not exhaustive.

You can also apply discretion under certain circumstances, if needed (for example, if the person fulfils the criteria to be a referee, but [is not currently in employment](#)).

Retired referee

If the referee has stated they are retired, they must still provide information that shows they are or were in a [recognised profession for passport purposes](#). You can accept the referee if they are retired from a recognised profession and meet the criteria to act as a referee.

If the referee has just told us they are 'retired' and not given their profession or qualifications, you must contact them for this information.

Confirming a referee's profession

If you need to confirm a referee's profession or qualifications, you may be able to use third party reference sources depending on their profession, for example:

- the [Medical Register](#) (General Medical Council)
- [Nursing and Midwifery Council register](#)
- [Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)
- [Companies House register](#) (if the person is part of a limited or unlimited company)
- VAT registration details on [GOV.UK](#)
- using an ADI number to search the [register of Approved Driving Instructors](#)

Related content

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Referee: information is missing or incorrect

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners what to do if the information given by the referee is missing or incorrect.

Sometimes the information given by a referee is missing or incorrect. If there is missing information from the referee, you (the examiner) may need to contact them to ask for it.

If the referee:

- gives you the missing information, you must complete the relevant checks and decide if you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns (if you do not have any concerns, you must consider the application as a whole and continue to examine it)
- does not give you the missing information and you need it, you must ask the customer for a new referee

DAP will create a **Missing referee details on a paper form** task if there is missing information about the referee on a paper form. You must [follow the guidance](#) for this task.

Referee does not provide their qualifications

If the referee tells us their profession but does not give us their professional qualifications you can accept them. For example, a dentist does not need to list their qualifications.

If you have any concerns about their qualifications, you must contact them to ask for more information about their qualifications.

If the referee is not employed and does not hold a qualification in a recognised profession, you must ask the customer for a new referee. However, before you reject the referee, you must still consider if you can accept them by applying discretion, or if they are [retired](#) but otherwise meet our criteria.

Referee's passport number is missing or incorrect

If the referee meets the criteria and appears genuine but does not include their passport details, you must contact them to ask for their passport number. If they are a non-British or non-Irish passport holder, they must send us a colour [photocopy of their EU, US or Commonwealth passport](#) personal details page.

If the referee's passport details differ from the information they gave on the application (it is in a different surname or person), see the [person's passport is in a different name](#).

If you are dealing with a paper referee (1 page or countersignature) and the referee has not provided their passport number, you must contact them to ask for it.

If you are processing on DAP (Digital Application Processing), when the referee responds with their passport number, you must use [DAP: how to edit the referee's details](#).

If you are processing on AMS (Application Management System), when they respond with their British passport number, you must:

1. Enter it in the 'countersignatures passport number' section on the 'countersig' tab on AMS.
2. Select 'Save'.

If the passport is British, the system will carry out an automatic check on the passport number.

If the referee responds with an Irish passport number, you must check the passport using the [Irish Passport Checking service](#).

Referee: if you ask the customer for a new photo

You may sometimes ask the customer for a new photo (for example, to meet photo standards). If the customer has provided a referee or you need one, and you are dealing with the application on AMS, you must:

- ask the customer using letter 350, to get their current referee to certify the back of the new photo
- send letter 276 (for a child application) or 274 (for an adult application) with the SE04 form to ask the customer for a new referee to confirm their identity and certify their photo

Referee not complete: documents received

If the customer has applied online and they send their documents before we receive the referee, their application will remain in DAP in an 'awaiting referee' state until the referee is received.

Paper referee (1 page form) complete: no documents

If the DHU (Document Handling Unit) receive a paper referee (1 page form) without the customer documents, the DHU will scan and validate the form and the customer will continue to receive notifications telling them to send the documents.

If SSL in an APC (Application Processing Centre) receive a paper referee (1 page form) for AMS processing without the customer documents, SSL will transfer the application to HM Passport Office.

Paper referee (1 page form) not complete: documents received (AMS)

If the customer sends their documents without the paper referee (1 page form) to SSL in an APC for AMS processing, SSL will:

1. Case note the application on AMS with 'no csig form enclosed'.
2. Send the application to examination.

If you receive an application like this, you must tell the customer [to provide the paper referee \(1 page form\)](#).

Paper referee (countersignature): incorrectly certified paper photo

The paper referee (countersignature) must [correctly certify the customer's photo](#). However, if they do not correctly certify the customer's paper photo you must contact the referee and ask them to confirm the customer's identity. If you:

- are contacting the referee [for more information](#) (using the letter 201) or to confirm they countersigned the application, your letter will ask them to confirm the application details
- do not need to contact the referee for more information, you must [send the referee letter 200](#) to confirm the customer's identity

Paper referee (countersignature): when a customer does not send a certified photo

If the customer provides a paper referee (countersignature) (for example, they are applying for a first time passport), you must have a correctly certified photo.

If the customer has not provided a correctly certified photo and we are examining the paper referee (countersignature), you must ask for one.

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Referee: using discretion

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners when and how to use discretion when examining a referee.

You (the examiner) may need to use discretion when examining a referee.

When examining a referee and considering using discretion, you must:

- check the person using reference sources (for example, [the General Medical Council](#), [Royal Mail](#) or the Yellow pages) if you need to contact them for missing information
- record your decision when you apply discretion (for example, by adding a case note) and include the reasons why
- consider the application as a whole and check if there are any other risk indicators

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must:

- refer the application to an Enhanced Application Checking (EAC) examiner if you are working on AMS (Application Management System); or,
- complete additional checks if you are working on DAP (Digital Application Processing); and
- refer the application to the Counter Fraud team (CFT)

Referee: unqualified

If the referee is an unqualified person, you can accept them if the application has no risk indicators and the referee either:

- is 70 years old or older; or
- fulfils the rest of the criteria to confirm the customer's identity but are not in (or retired) from a recognised profession

For example, a person can be a referee if they are the customer's retired next door neighbour who was a cleaner.

Referee: not in employment

If the referee is not in employment, you can accept them if all the below apply:

- they fulfil the criteria to be a referee, but are not currently employed in the relevant and recognised profession
- they have an acceptable passport
- they can provide the correct qualifications for their profession
- there are no risk indicators

For example, a person can be a referee if they are a qualified dentist but currently not in employment.

Referee: 'capacity known' missing

If the referee has not told us how they know the customer (for example, they leave the 'how do you know them' section blank), you may use discretion if:

- there is no suggestion the person is related to the customer; and,
- you have no fraud or safeguarding concerns (for example, child protection)

If you have no fraud or safeguarding concerns but do not accept the 'capacity known' section as blank, you must [ask for a new person to confirm their identity](#).

Referee: known customer less than 2 years

You may accept a referee who has known the customer for less than 2 years, if they fit the criteria to be a referee and the application is for:

- a member of His Majesty's Armed Forces and their dependents, using the dedicated armed forces route; or,
- a member of His Majesty's Diplomatic or Official service and the referee is a Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) staff; or,
- a prisoner who is overseas and their referee is a member of the Local Service or FCDO staff who have personal knowledge of the individual

In all other application scenarios, if the referee has known the customer for less than 2 years, you must:

3. Contact the customer by phone, to:
 - ask why they cannot provide a referee who has known them for more than 2 years
 - tell them a referee (who meets the criteria) can live in the UK (if the customer lives in the UK) or in a different country to them (if the customer lives overseas)
4. Ask the customer for additional documentation confirming their identity.
5. [Contact the referee \(by sending letter 200\)](#) to confirm they countersigned the application.
6. Complete additional checks (if you are processing on DAP) or refer the application to an Enhanced Application Checking (EAC) examiner if you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns.
7. Refer the application to an operational team leader (OTL) to ask them to consider the application as a whole and make a decision, using a balance of probabilities.

Referee: overseas customer cannot find a referee

You may receive an application where a customer living overseas is unable to find a referee who [meets the criteria](#), for example, they are unable to find a referee who holds one of the accepted passports or works in a recognised profession. You must contact the customer by phone, to:

- ask why they have been unable to get a suitable person; and
- explain, a referee (who [meets the criteria](#)) can live in a different country to them

If the customer still cannot provide a suitable referee who [meets the criteria](#), you must raise a guidance query and include all supporting evidence with your query.

Add a case note to record the response to your query.

Paper referee (1 page or countersignature): more than 6 months old

When examining a paper referee (countersignature or 1 page) and they have completed and dated a paper application form more than 6 months before we receive it, you must reject the application and ask the customer for a new form, photo, and referee.

Paper referee (countersignature): dated the form before the customer

If you have a paper referee (countersignature) who has dated the application form before the customer signed their declaration, you can use discretion and accept them unless you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns.

Paper referee (countersignature): same handwriting throughout the application

You can use discretion and accept a paper application form with a paper referee (countersignature) with what appears the same handwriting throughout the form, if, both:

- the customer's and paper referee (countersignature)'s signature are clearly different
- you have no fraud or safeguarding (for example, child protection) concerns

If you are happy to accept this form you must contact the referee and ask, if they:

- completed the countersignature section; and
- certified the photo

If the paper referee (countersignature) confirms they did not complete or sign the application, but they know the customer, you must:

- ask the customer for a new application form, photos, and a new paper referee (countersignature)
- send letter 171 'Forged countersignature warning letter' to the customer
- add a case note explaining your decision and actions

Related content

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DAP: how to examine a referee

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners how to examine a digital referee, paper referee (1 page form) and paper referee (countersignature) on Digital Application Processing (DAP).

You can ask the customer to provide a referee if one has not been provided, if you decide you need one (for example, you cannot identify the intended passport holder). You must ask them to provide a referee when the customer has applied:

- for their first British passport (child or adult)
- to replace a British passport that has been damaged, lost or stolen (child or adult)
- to renew a British passport for a child under 12

DAP calls the information given by a referee a reference. DAP will show one of these tasks:

- **Digital reference – Accept or reject** (digital referee who is a British passport holder and is resident in the UK)
- **Foreign digital reference – Accept or reject:**
 - digital referee who is not a British passport holder and not resident in the UK; or
 - digital referee who is not a British passport holder; or
 - digital referee who is not resident in the UK
- **Paper reference – accept or reject** (referee completes either a paper 1 page form or a paper application form SE04 or OS)

The system automatically checks some of the information provided by the referee and may have created other tasks, for example a watchlist task.

How to examine a referee

You must use this list to help you deal with the referee task. You must follow the relevant guidance and check:

1. The referee's responses are acceptable in line with '[Referee response](#)', if the referee has selected 'no':
 - you must read any case notes or additional information to see if there is evidence to support the referee's responses
 - and it is a renewal or replacement application, you must look at any previous passport applications
2. The referee [works in \(or are retired from\) a recognised profession](#).
3. To see if the referee is [related to the customer](#).
4. The referee has a [British, Irish, EU, US, or Commonwealth](#) passport
 - you must check the **documents** tab to see the colour photocopy of the referee's foreign passport

5. To see if you can use discretion to accept the referee.
6. If you need to contact (phone) the referee to ask for more information.

If it is a **digital reference task only** and the referee confirmed they are retired, the Employer section will be blank, and the referee will have been asked to tell us:

- their Profession (or qualifications) – if the referee has just said ‘retired’, you must ask them for this information (by phone)
- their home address only (but DAP shows this in a section called Work address)

If it is a **paper reference task**, you must check if all the below apply:

- if there is a message showing either referee’s details do not match the passport records or the referee’s passport is not on our records, see [DAP referee's passport is not on passport records](#)
- the scan of the paper form, to see:
 - if the [handwriting is the same on the entire application](#)
 - the paper referee (countersignature) section has been completed in full
- if there is missing or incorrect information for the referee in the task or the scan of the paper form, you must see [DAP: how to edit referee's details](#), to:
 - change the incorrect information or
 - contact the referee to ask for the missing information
- the paper referee (countersignature) has correctly certified the back of 1 photo, and:
 - they have confirmed the photo is a true likeness of the customer
 - compare their signature on the application form and the certified photo
 - check if the name on the back of the certified photo matches the name on the application
 - contact the paper referee (countersignature) if the certification on the photo is incomplete

DAP: how to accept the digital, foreign digital or paper reference

If you can accept the referee, you must:

1. Select **Yes** in the ‘Do you accept this reference?’ section.
2. Select the reasons why you selected yes, based on the checks you have done (you can select one or more reasons):
 - **evidence provided above**
 - **address confirmed**
 - **employer details confirmed**
 - **call with referee**
 - **other** (add a case note to explain why you accepted the referee)
3. Click **Save**.

You do not have to complete all the checks listed in the on-screen reasons for accepting the referee. For example, you only need to [check the referee's address](#) or their [employer details](#) in certain circumstances.

If you are accepting the referee based on the information shown on DAP (and you have not needed to complete extra checks) you must select **evidence provided above**.

DAP: how to ask for a new digital, foreign digital or paper reference

If you do not accept the referee, you must:

1. Select No, ask applicant for a new referee.
2. Select the reasons why:
 - **profession not recognised**
 - **how they know the applicant is not acceptable** (for example, they are related)
 - **address not confirmed**
 - **other** (add a case note to explain why you rejected the referee)
3. Click **Save**.

DAP: how to ask for a colour photocopy of the foreign referee's passport

If you need a colour photocopy of the referee's passport, you must:

1. Select Not sure, need applicant to send a copy of the referee's passport.
2. Add a case note to explain why you are asking for a colour photocopy of the referee's passport.
3. Click **Save**.
4. Send an email to the customer to request the colour photocopy of the referee's passport.

DAP: how to ask the referee for more information

If you need to ask the referee for more information, you must:

- contact the referee by phone, for example if you need to confirm their profession, employer details, or relationship to the customer (put the application on hold if you need to call them later)
- see [Contact the referee](#) if you need to send a letter 200 or 201

DAP: clear task – applicant did not need to send us a referee (paper reference only)

You must only select this option if the customer has provided a paper referee (countersignature). If the customer has provided a digital referee or paper referee (1 page form) you must [always examine the referee](#), so you must not select this option.

If there are any watchlist tasks for the referee, you must complete these (even if the customer did not need to send a referee) and decide if you must refer the application for further investigation.

If you can clear the task because the customer did not need to send us a referee, you must:

1. Select Clear this task – applicant did not need to send us a referee with their application.
2. Add a case note to explain why you are not examining the referee.
3. Click **Save**.

DAP: if there are concerns about a digital, foreign, or paper referee

If you suspect fraud or safeguarding concerns about a referee, you must:

1. Complete additional checks, as required by following the guidance.
2. Select Refer for investigation.
3. Select a reason why:
 - **unable to contact referee**
 - **other** (add a case note to explain why you are referring the application for investigation)
4. Click **Save**.

DAP will transfer the application to the Counter Fraud team.

DAP: referee's passport is not on our records or details do not match (paper reference only)

DAP completes automatic checks on the referee's passport number recorded on a paper form (1 page, SE04, or OS form) against passport records. DAP does this for all applications with a paper reference, because the system will not know whether the referee holds a British passport or a foreign passport, as we do not ask for this information on the paper forms.

DAP may then show either of these messages:

- the referee's details do not match the Main Index
- the referee's passport is not on the Main Index

You must:

1. Check the information for the paper referee by selecting:
 - **Check the referee's details** to view the referee details section
 - **Check the form** to view a scan of the application form
 - Check the **Documents** tab, as the referee may have sent a copy of their foreign passport

2. If the referee's details are recorded incorrectly on DAP, use [DAP: how to edit the referee's details](#).
3. If the details are correct, use:
 - [Checking a referee's British passport](#) or [Checking a referee's passport: passport in a different name](#) if the referee holds a British passport
 - [Checking a referee's Irish passport](#) if the referee holds an Irish passport
 - [Checking a referee's non-British or non-Irish passport](#) if the referee holds an EU, US, or Commonwealth passport

DAP: how to edit the referee's details (paper reference only)

If there is missing or incorrect information for the paper referee in the task, you must edit the referee's details. You can only edit the current referee's details.

You must:

1. Click on the Application details tab.
2. Click **Referee**.
3. Click Edit details.
4. Add in any missing referee data from:
 - any contact you have had with the referee (for example if you have phoned them to check information)
 - the scan of the paper application form or 1 page form in the **Documents** tab
5. Correct any incorrect referee data.
6. Add a case note to show what change you made.
7. Click **Save**.

The system will automatically update the referee details shown in the task.

Related content

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DAP: Missing referee details on a paper form task

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners working on DAP (Digital Application Processing) how to process the **Missing referee details on a paper form** task.

If a paper referee fails DAP data validation, because one or more of the sections on the form have not been completed, the users who process the DAP Intervention Queue will try to contact the referee to resolve this.

If the users cannot validate the paper referee details, DAP will:

- create a **Missing referee details on a paper form** task
- not show any data in the **Referee** tab
- add a scanned copy of the referee section of the form to the application

Because DAP has not recorded a referee being present, you must ask the customer for a referee (unless you are referring for investigation).

To deal with a **Missing referee details on a paper form** task, you (the examiner) must:

1. Review the application to check if the paper referee would be acceptable, if we had their full details.
2. Decide if you must select:
 - **Get missing details from the same referee** – if the form is incomplete and we ask the customer to ask the referee to complete a new 1 page form
 - **Ask applicant for a referee – the one they provided is not valid** – if the referee they provided is not valid; does not meet the criteria to act as a referee or there are no referee details on the form
 - **Clear this task – applicant did not need to send us a referee with their application** – if guidance confirms you do not need to examine the referee
 - **Refer for investigation**
3. Add a case note to explain your decision.
4. Select **Save**.

Related content

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AMS: how to examine a digital or paper referee (1 page form)

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how to examine a digital or paper (1 page) referee on AMS (Application Management System)

If the referee completes their section:

- online, AMS (Application Management System) will show the digital referee's information in a case note
- offline, the paper referee (1 page form) will be scanned onto the application

If you are examining a digital referee or paper referee (1 page form) on AMS, you must answer yes or no to the questions in the table below:

Check	Yes or no
Does the application have any warnings or matches that relate to the referee?	If yes, you must deal with them, in line with the warnings and matches guidance. If no, you must continue with examination.
Are all watchlist checks completed in line with confirming identity guidance?	If yes, you must continue with examination. If no, do the identity checks in line with the confirming identity guidance.
Is the referee acceptable to confirm the customer's identity ?	If yes, continue with examination. If no, you must consider if you can apply discretion.
Can you apply discretion to accept the referee?	If yes, you must confirm they meet all other criteria to be a referee and continue with examination. If no, you must ask the customer for a new paper (1 page form) referee.
Are the referee's responses to the questions we ask them acceptable, in line with Referee response ?	If yes, continue with examination. If no, you must read all other case notes and the additional information section, including from the previous passport application (if you need to) to see if there are reasons to support the referee's responses.

Do you have a response from the paper referee (1 page form) to letter 920?	<p>If yes, you must check the responses are in line with Referee response</p> <p>If no, you must send letter 920 to the paper referee (1 page form)</p>
Have you read all other case notes and the additional information fields, including from the previous passport application (if you need to) to see if there are reasons to support the referee's responses?	<p>If yes, continue with examination.</p> <p>If no, you must read all other case notes and the additional information fields, including from the previous passport application (if you need to) to see if there are reasons to support the referee's responses.</p>

You must then add a case note to show the actions and decisions you made. You must include in your case note:

- if the referee has not confirmed either the customer's photo or address
- 'referee details checked – no action required' if you do not need to take any action

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must:

- refer the application to an Enhanced Application Checking (EAC) examiner
- refer the application to the Counter Fraud team (CFT)

AMS: digital referee's information case notes

If you have a digital referee on AMS, the referee's information will be included in case notes:

Case note section	Detail	Examiner action
Referee details		
First and middle names:	'referee's forenames'	No action.
Last name:	'referee's surname'	No action.
Date of birth:	'referee's date of birth'	No action.
Passport number:	'referee's passport number'	No action.
Passport expiry:	'referee's passport expiry month and year'	No action.
Are they retired:	'yes/no'	If yes, the referee's address will be a residential address.

		<p>If no, the referee must also provide their employment address.</p> <p>If no and the address is a residential address, you must consider if the referee is self-employed or works from home.</p>
Profession:	'referee's profession'	You must check if their profession is similar to one of the recognised professions (if needed) in line with this guidance.
Employer:	'referee's employer'	No action.
Work address:	<p>line1: '1st line of referee's work address'</p> <p>line2: '2nd line of referee's work address'</p> <p>town or city: 'town or city of referee's work address'</p> <p>postcode: 'postcode of referee's work address'</p>	<p>You must check if the address is a business address (some fields may be missing, depending on the address).</p> <p>If the address is a residential address, check the 'Retired field'.</p> <p>If the customer is retired, it will show Home address and not Work address.</p>
Telephone number:	'referees phone number'	No action.
E-mail:	'refereeemail@email.com'	No action.
Declaration Date:	'date and time the referee completed the declaration'	No action.
Answers about person applying:		
Number of years known:	'the number of years the referee has known the customer'	No action, as DCS will not accept anything less than 2 years.
How they know them:	'how the referee knows the customer (for example, colleague or neighbour)'	You must confirm the relationship with the customer, in line with this guidance.
Relationship between person applying and the applicant:	'confirmed' or 'not confirmed'	<p>Only present if someone else is applying on the intended passport holder's behalf.</p> <p>If confirmed, take no action.</p>

		If not confirmed, you must refer the application to an Enhanced Application Checking (EAC) officer.
Address:	'confirmed' or 'not confirmed'	If confirmed, no action. If not confirmed, you must refer to confirming the customer's address.
Photo:	'confirmed' or 'not confirmed'	If confirmed, no action. If not confirmed, you must refer to confirming the customer's photo.
Reason they could not confirm:	'reason the referee has said no to the photo of the customer' (only present if the referee answers 'not confirmed' to the photo)	Only present if the referee answers 'not confirmed' to the photo. You must refer to confirming the customer's photo.
Father's details: (on a child's application)	'confirmed' or 'not confirmed'	If confirmed, take no action. If 'not confirmed', you must refer to confirming the child's parents details.
Mother's details: (on a child's application)	'confirmed' or 'not confirmed'	If confirmed, take no action. If not confirmed, you must refer to confirming the child's parents details.
Place of birth: (on a child's application)	'confirmed' or 'not confirmed'	If confirmed, take no action. If not confirmed, you must refer to confirming the child's place of birth.

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AMS: how to examine a paper referee (countersignature)

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how to examine a paper referee (countersignature) on AMS (Application Management System).

If you are examining a paper referee (countersignature) on AMS (Application Management System), you must:

1. Check the application for any warnings or matches relating to the paper referee (countersignature) and deal with them, in line with the warnings guidance.
2. Check all watchlist checks are completed (in line with confirming identity guidance).
3. Check the documents tab to see the colour photocopy of a referee's foreign passport (if they hold an EU, US or Commonwealth passport).
4. [Check the referee's Irish passport](#) (if they hold an Irish passport).
5. Check the paper referee (countersignature)'s information on the application matches the details recorded on AMS
6. Correct any errors (if AMS allows you to change the information)
7. Click **Save** to save the changes and prompt the system to re-run automated checks
8. Check the paper referee (countersignature) is [acceptable to confirm the customer identity](#).
9. Check if the [handwriting](#) is the same on the entire application.
10. Check if you need to apply discretion.
11. Check the paper referee (countersignature)'s section has been completed in full and contact the referee if any information is missing.
12. Check the paper referee (countersignature) has correctly certified the back of 1 photo, and:
 - they have confirmed the photo is a true likeness of the customer
 - compare their signature on the application form and the certified photo
 - check if the name on the back of the certified photo matches the name on the application
 - contact the paper referee (countersignature) if the certification on the photo is incomplete
13. Read all other case notes and the additional information fields, including from the previous passport application (if you need to) to see if there are reasons to support the paper referee (countersignature)'s responses.
14. Contact the paper referee (countersignature) if you need to do additional confirming identity checks, to confirm their identity or that of the customer.
15. Add a case note to show the actions and decisions you made.

If you cannot accept the paper referee (countersignature), you must ask the customer for a new one.

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must:

- refer the application to an Enhanced Application Checking (EAC) examiner
- refer the application to the Counter Fraud team (CFT)

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Digital referee and paper referee (1 page form) responses

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff what to do with the information a digital referee or paper referee (1 page form) provides and how to process an application depending on their response.

When a customer uses a digital referee to help confirm their identity, you, the examiner must check the referee's responses to the questions they are asked by Digital Customer Services (DCS).

If the referee has selected 'NO':

- DAP (Digital Application Processing) will create a **Confirm answers from applicant's referee** task for any applications for children or adults where a third party has completed the declaration (the task will show 'false' next to the information where the referee has selected 'NO')
- DAP will show you the referee's responses on the referee task, for any adult applications
- AMS (Application Management System) will show 'not confirmed' by that question

When a customer uses a paper referee (1 page form), if the application is for:

- an adult, the referee must confirm the details by signing the 1 page form
- a child, the referee must confirm the details by signing both the 1 page form and in their written response to letter 920

You must:

- ask the customer for a new referee if they are:
 - not acceptable to confirm a customer's identity for passport purposes
 - unable to confirm a customer's or child's details
- complete additional checks (if processing on DAP) or refer an application to an EAC (Enhanced Application Checking) examiner (if processing on AMS), if:
 - the referee tells you anything that raises concerns about the safety of the person
 - you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns
- refer an application to Counter Fraud teams if the information provided or the referee tells you anything that raises concerns about the safeguarding, vulnerability or protection of a child or an adult

If a current referee is replacing a referee who was rejected because they were unable to confirm a question or did not respond to us, you must follow [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#), even if they selected yes to the question.

Response: confirming the customer's photo is a true likeness

How you deal with an application when the referee has not confirmed the customer's photo is a true likeness, will depend on if the application is for an adult or a child.

Child application: photo is not confirmed

If the system shows 'false' or 'not confirmed', the referee has selected 'NO'.

You must phone the referee, to ask why they said the photo is not a true likeness of the customer. After considering their reason, you must:

- send letter 200 to the referee, if they tell us the photo, is:
 - of the child but their appearance has changed dramatically (for example, their hair is a different colour)
 - not a recent photo of the child
- refer the application to investigation if the referee:
 - did not give a reason why they could not identify the child
 - tells us the child in the photo is not the child named on the application

After you have sent the referee a letter 200 and they:

- respond and tell you:
 - the photo is a true likeness of the child named in the application, you must continue with standard examination (for example, you must make sure that the photo meets Photo standards)
 - the photo is not a true likeness of the child named in the application; you must refer the application for investigation
- respond and you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must complete additional checks (if processing on DAP) or refer the application to an EAC examiner (if processing on AMS)
- do not respond and you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must ask the customer for a new referee
- do not respond and you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must complete additional checks (if processing on DAP) or refer the application to an EAC examiner (if processing on AMS)

Adult application: photo is not confirmed

If the referee has selected 'NO' they have confirmed the photo is not a true likeness of the adult applicant, you must:

- phone the referee, to ask why they said the photo is not a true likeness of the customer, if they:
 - did not give a reason why they could not identify the customer
 - tells us the customer in the photo is not the customer named on the application

- send letter 200 to the referee, if they tell us the photo, is:
 - of the customer but their appearance has changed dramatically (for example, their hair is a different colour)
 - not a recent photo of the customer

If you have phoned the referee, you must:

- add a case note to show the conversation you had with the referee
- send letter 200 to the referee if they:
 - confirm they made a mistake on the application (for example, they pressed the wrong button)
 - can explain why the photo is different
 - refer the application for investigation, if you have fraud or safeguarding concerns about the referee's response

If the referee responds to the letter 200 and tells you:

- the photo is a true likeness of the customer named in the application, you must continue with standard examination (for example, you must make sure that the photo meets Photo standards)
- the photo is not a true likeness of the customer named in the application, you must refer the application for investigation

You must complete [further checks to confirm the customer's photo is a true likeness](#), if either:

- the referee tells you anything that raises concerns about the safety of the person
- you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns

If you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns and their current referee does not reply to letter 200 after 2 weeks or you are not satisfied with the referee's response, you must ask the customer for a new referee and send the letter 200 (see, [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#)).

Further checks: confirming the adult photo is a true likeness

If you must complete further checks when confirming the adult photo is a true likeness, you must:

- refer an application to EAC (if processing the application on AMS)
- complete additional checks (if processing on DAP)

You must phone the referee to ask why they said the photo is not a true likeness of the intended passport holder (for example, if they did not give a reason or told us it is not the adult or child named on the application).

You must:

- add a case note to show the conversation you had with the referee
- send letter 200 to the referee if they:
 - confirm they made a mistake on the application (for example, they pressed the wrong button)
 - can explain why the photo is different
- refer the application for investigation, if you have fraud or safeguarding concerns about the referee's response

Response: confirming the customer's address

If the referee completes the process online, Digital Customer Services (DCS) will ask the digital referee to confirm the customer or the adult and child are linked to the address provided.

The digital referee provides HM Passport Office with independent verification of the customer's current address. This is:

- because it is not always possible for HM Passport Office to verify a customer's address

If the referee selects:

- **YES**, the system will show 'true' to show the address is **confirmed** and you must continue with standard examination
- **NO**, the system will show 'false' to show the address is **not confirmed**, see: Not confirmed: the customer's address

However, if a current referee is replacing a referee who was rejected because they were unable to confirm a question or did not respond to us, you must follow [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#), even if they selected yes to the question.

If the paper referee (1 page form) has responded 'NO' to letter 920, see: [Not confirmed: the customer's address](#).

Not confirmed: the customer's address

If the referee has selected **NO**, you must phone the referee to find out why. The referee may tell us:

- they made a mistake with the application (for example, they pressed the wrong button)
- they cannot confirm the exact address, but they do know:
 - the customer lives in the area, for example they know the road or a local name
 - the child lives in the area with the named parent
- they know the adult customer, but the child does not live at that address
- the referee tells us the intended passport holder has moved, and they do not know the address or have no link to the address

If you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns and the referee tells you they made a mistake (for example, they pressed the wrong button) or cannot confirm the exact address but knows the road or area the customer and child lives in, you must:

1. Ask the referee to send a letter by email or post, to explain what happened and to include any additional information. Tell them:
 - we will accept a handwritten or typed letter
 - to include the date and their name
 - to include their signature (if they send it by post)
 - where they need to send it (office address or team email)
2. Add a case note to show the details of your conversation with the referee.
3. Continue to examine the application.

You must complete [further checks to confirm the customer's address](#), if:

- the referee tells you anything that raises concerns about the safety of a customer
- the referee tells us the customer has moved and they do not know the address or have no link to the address
- you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns

If you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns and their current referee does not reply to letter 200 after 2 weeks or you are not satisfied with the referee's response, you must ask the customer for a new referee and send the letter 200 (see, [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#)).

Further checks: confirming the customer's address

If you must complete further checks when confirming a customer's address, you must:

- refer an application to EAC (if processing the application on AMS)
- complete additional checks (if processing the application on DAP)

If the referee has told the examiner they cannot confirm the child's address, you must:

- ask the customer for a new referee
- send letter 200 to the new referee to confirm the details of the customer

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must refer the application for investigation.

Response: confirming a parent's details

If the referee completes the process online, Digital Customer Services (DCS) asks the digital referee to check the parents' details on the application. A digital referee is asked to confirm the parent's (mother and father) separately.

If the referee selects '**YES**', the system will show 'true' to show:

- Mother's details 'confirmed'
- Father's details 'confirmed'

You must continue with standard examination if both the mother's details and father's details are 'confirmed'. However, if a current referee is replacing a referee who was rejected because they were unable to confirm a question or did not respond to us, you must follow [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#), even if they selected yes to the question.

If the referee selects '**NO**', the system will show 'false', to show that parent's details are 'not confirmed' and you must follow [Not confirmed: a child's parents' details](#).

If the paper referee (1 page form) has responded 'NO' to letter 920, see: [Not confirmed: a child's parents' details](#).

Not confirmed: a child's parents' details

If the system shows 'false' or 'not confirmed':

- the referee has selected '**NO**' when DCS asked them to confirm if the parents' details are correct
- a customer has left the parent's details blank, in this case the referee will not be asked to confirm the blank information

You must check if the parent's details are 'not confirmed' because that parent is not named on the customer's current application and the parent is also not named on:

- the documents received with the application (for example, there is no father named on the child's birth certificate or court order); or
- any of the customer's previous applications (for example, when no other documents are received because the application is a renewal or replacement)

If this applies and you have no fraud, safeguarding or vulnerability concerns with the application, you must:

1. Add a case note (on the current application):
 - what evidence was seen to confirm the parent is not named on the documents
 - if a parent is not named on the previous application (for example, the application is a renewal)
2. Continue to process the application in line with guidance.

When a parent's details are 'not confirmed' and the parent is named on the customer's current application, previous application or any documents provided, you must manually complete a name watchlist check on the missing parent's details (for example, their father). If there is:

- a partial or full match record of the parent on the watchlist, you must add a case note and refer for investigation (to the Counter Fraud team)
- no record of the parent on the watchlist, phone the referee to ask why they selected 'NO'. You must not tell the referee if an application or documents provided by the customer show the parents details

If the referee tells you they made a mistake (for example, they pressed the wrong button) or the parents' details are wrong, and you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must:

1. Ask the referee to send a letter by post or email, to explain what happened and to include any additional information. Tell them:
 - we will accept a handwritten or typed letter
 - to include the date and their name
 - to include their signature (if they send it by post)
 - where they need to send it (office address or team email)
2. Add a case note to show the details of your conversation with the referee.

Depending on the referee's response, you must consider if the application must be referred to Child Protection and Safeguarding (CPST) team. For example, the referee has told us information that can be a safeguarding concern.

If there are no fraud, safeguarding or vulnerability concerns with the application, you:

- can continue to examine the application, if the referee tells you they made a mistake (for example, they pressed the wrong button)
- must ask the customer for a new referee and send the letter 200, if their current referee does not reply to letter 200 after 2 weeks, or you are not satisfied with the referee's response (see, [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response.](#)) For example, they tell us:
 - they cannot confirm the parent's details because of a lack of knowledge of the child
 - the parents' details are incorrect on the application

Response: confirming relationships (supporting parental responsibility)

The referee does not confirm parental responsibility but provides information that will help us confirm has parental responsibility for a child. See Parents and guardians: consent guidance to confirm who has parental responsibility for a child.

If the referee completes the process online, DCS will ask the referee to confirm:

- the full name of the person who made the application on behalf of the child and their relationship to the child
- if the person who made the application has a relationship to the child

The referee can only answer 'YES' or 'NO'.

When dealing with a child application, you (the examiner) must:

- look at the details of the person making the child application, to confirm if they are responsible for the child
- make sure the documents the customer has provided support the child application

Regardless of how the referee answers the question, you, the examiner, must confirm if the person making the application has parental responsibility or legal guardianship for the child.

Under the **Confirm answers from applicant's referee** task, the referee's response to this question is shown under **Confirm Requester Details**.

If the referee selects:

- **'YES'**, the system will show 'true' to show the relationship between the person applying and the applicant is 'confirmed', and you must continue with standard examination
- **'NO'**, the system will show 'false', to show the relationship between the person applying and the applicant is 'not confirmed', see: [Not confirmed: confirming the relationship between the person applying and the child \(supporting parental responsibility\)](#).

However, if a current referee is replacing a referee who was rejected because they were unable to confirm a question or did not respond to us, you must follow [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#), even if they selected yes to the question.

If the paper referee (1 page form) has responded 'NO' to letter 920, see: [Not confirmed: confirming the relationship between the person applying and the child \(supporting parental responsibility\)](#).

Not confirmed: confirming relationships (supporting parental responsibility)

If the system shows 'false' or 'not confirmed', the referee has selected **'NO'**. You must:

1. Phone the referee to ask why they selected 'NO'.
2. Ask the referee to send a letter (or email) to explain why they selected 'NO' and to include any additional information. Tell them:
 - we will accept a handwritten or typed letter
 - to include the date and their name
 - to include their signature (if they send it by post)
 - where they need to send it (office address or team email)
3. Add a case note to show the details of your conversation with the referee.

We must have confirmation in writing what the connection is between the person applying and the child.

Depending on the referee's response, you must consider if the application must be referred to Child Protection and Safeguarding (CPST) team. For example, the referee has told us information that can be a safeguarding concern.

You must complete [further checks to confirm the customer's relationship](#), if the referee selects 'NO' and tells us:

- the relationship between the person making the application and the child is not correct
- they do not have a relationship to the child (they are not responsible for the child)

If there are no fraud, safeguarding or vulnerability concerns with the application and:

- the referee tells you they made a mistake (for example, they pressed the wrong button), you can continue to examine the application
- their current referee does not reply to letter 200 after 2 weeks or you are not satisfied with the referee's response, for example, they cannot confirm the details because they do not know enough about the person making the application on behalf of the child. You must ask the customer for a new referee and send the letter 200 (see, [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#)).

Further checks: confirming relationships (supporting parental responsibility)

If you must complete further checks when confirming a relationship between a person applying and the child, you must:

- refer an application to EAC (if processing the application on AMS)
- complete additional checks (if processing on DAP)

You must consider the application as a whole, to confirm the person making the application has a relationship to the child (they have parental responsibility). If you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must:

1. Ask the customer to provide a new referee.
2. Complete checks on the new referee.
3. Send letter 200 to the new referee to confirm the details of the child and customer.

If you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must refer the application for investigation.

Response: confirming a child's place of birth

If the referee completes the process online, DCS will ask the digital referee to confirm that the child's place of birth is correct.

If the referee cannot confirm the details we have on the birth certificate, we will ask the customer for more evidence (for example, a new referee or supporting documents) to confirm the child's place of birth.

If the referee selects:

- 'YES', the system will show 'true' to show the child's place of birth is 'confirmed' and you must continue with standard examination
- 'NO', the system will show 'false' to show the child's place of birth is 'not confirmed', see: [Not confirmed: a child's place of birth](#)

However, if a current referee is replacing a referee who was rejected because they were unable to confirm a question or did not respond to us, you must follow [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#), even if they selected yes to the question.

If the paper referee (1 page form) has responded 'NO' to letter 920, see: [Not confirmed: a child's place of birth](#).

Not confirmed: a child's place of birth

If the system shows 'false' or 'not confirmed', the referee has selected 'NO'. You must:

- check the child's place of birth, using the documents we received with the application (for example, the child's birth certificate) or their previous application
- phone the referee to ask why they selected 'NO' and where they think the child was born

If you have no fraud, safeguarding or vulnerability concerns with the application and the referee tells you, the town, country, or region the child is born or they have made a mistake (for example, they pressed the wrong button), you must:

1. Ask the referee to send a letter by post or email, to explain what happened and to include any additional information. Tell them:
 - we will accept a handwritten or typed letter
 - to include the date and their name
 - to include their signature (if they send it by post)
 - where they need to send it (office address or team email)
2. Add a case note to show the details of your conversation with the referee.
3. Continue to process the application in line with guidance.

You must complete further checks to confirm a child's place of birth, if:

- you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns; or
- the referee tells you anything that raises concerns about the safety of a child; or
- the referee tells us the child was born in a different town, country, or region, to the one on the application (for example, you may need to:
 - ask the customer for extra documents or information to confirm the correct place of birth; and,
 - reconfirm the child's claim to British nationality; or
 - request a new referee, if the details were correct on the application

If the referee gives us a different country of birth for the child and this is confirmed, you must follow the Place of birth guidance.

You must ask the customer for a new referee and send the letter 200 (see, [Response to question: unable to confirm or no response](#)), if you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns and:

- their current referee does not reply to letter 200 after 2 weeks, or;
- you are not satisfied with the referee's response, for example, they do not know where the child was born or gives you different information to that on the supporting documents

Further checks: confirming a child's place of birth

If you must complete further checks when confirming a child's place of birth, you must:

- refer an application to EAC (if processing the application on AMS)
- complete additional checks (if processing on DAP)

You must consider the information the referee has told the examiner and the whole application.

If the referee tells you they do not know where the child was born or gives you different information to that on the supporting documents, but you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns, you must:

1. Ask the customer to provide a new referee.
2. Complete checks on the new referee.
3. Send letter 200 to the new referee to confirm the details of the child and customer.

You must continue with standard examination (if multiple referees cannot confirm the child's place of birth), if you:

- can confirm the information, using the supporting documents
- do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns

If you have referred the application for investigation, the investigator will decide if they must add the customer or child's details to the watchlist.

Response to question: unable to confirm or no response

You must ask the customer for a new referee if their current referee does not reply to us after 2 weeks or you are not satisfied with their response. If you do not have any fraud or safeguarding concerns and for example:

- they cannot confirm the parent's details because of a lack of knowledge of the child
- the parents' details are incorrect on the application
- they do not know where the child was born
- gives you different information to that on the supporting documents

When you get the new referee, you must:

1. Examine the new referee.
2. Write to the new referee to confirm their details (using letter 200).

Related content

[Contents](#)

DAP: Contact the referee

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners working on the Digital Application Processing (DAP) system how we contact a referee, the timescale we allow for a referee confirming a customer's identity to respond, and how the referee can reply to us.

You, the examiner, may need to contact the referee as part of the application. Before you contact them, you must check [they are acceptable](#) and genuine.

When dealing with an application on DAP and this guidance or other guidance confirms you need to contact a referee, by phone or email, you must:

- follow the How to communicate with third parties guidance
- make sure the customer's or child's name is removed from the letter 200

Contact a referee on DAP: when we need more information (phone, email or letter 201)

If you need more information to confirm if a referee is acceptable, you must:

1. Check their details, including their address and phone number using outside reference sources.
2. Examine them using this guidance.
3. Contact them by:
 - [phone](#)
 - [email](#)
 - [post](#)
4. Follow the referee: [response times to letters and emails](#), if you do not get a response from the referee.

DAP: contact a referee by phone

You may contact the referee by phone to confirm:

- how they know the customer
- how long they have known the customer
- their profession
- their professional qualifications
- their passport number
- if they have had a passport in any other name

When you contact the referee by phone you must:

- check their phone number using outside reference sources
- confirm the person you are speaking to is the referee

- tell them we are making checks on an application where they are the referee
- not tell them who the customer is (for security reasons)
- not tell them the customer's name as this defeats the purpose – we expect the person acting as referee to be able to confirm the application and customer's details
- if there is no answer from a referee, follow the how to contact customers by phone guidance

If you are dealing with an urgent or compassionate application, you must contact the referee by phone, if you are certain they can correctly identify the customer.

DAP: contact a referee by email

When contacting a referee by email, you must send it from your team email address and not your personal email address.

Before you contact a paper referee (1 page form or countersignature), you must check the email address on the 1 page paper referee form, SE04 or OS paper application form matches the one on the system, if it does not, you must change it.

You must:

- manually enter the referee's email address from the 1 page paper referee form, onto DAP (it is not scanned on)
- use the How to communicate with a third party: contact third party by email guidance, to send a letter, by email, to the referee

DAP: dealing with a referee's email response

You may accept email responses from a referee, in line with the Electronic Communications Act 2000, that:

- do not have physical signatures
- come from the email address we have on the customer's application

Follow the how to communicate with a third party guidance when dealing with a reply from a referee by email.

Referee on DAP: contact by post

When you contact a referee by post you must follow the How to contact a third party guidance.

Referee on DAP: contact by fax

Some referees may contact us by fax, which you must accept. You must treat their response as if they sent it to you as a letter in the post.

Referee on DAP: response times

If you are waiting for a response from a referee, you must:

1. Send the letter by post or email to the referee and allow them 28 days to respond.
2. 14 days after the first letter, send the same letter again by post, asking them to respond.
3. After 14 days of the second letter, see [Unable to contact the referee](#).

If you do not receive a response from the referee, you must reject them and ask the customer for a new referee.

Referee on DAP: unable to contact the referee

If you are unable to contact a referee, for example, a letter or email has been returned because they are not at that address or they have not responded to letters sent to them, you must:

- reject them and [ask the customer for a new referee](#) to confirm their identity
- complete additional checks, if you have fraud or safeguarding concerns

DAP: two referees do not respond to the letter 200 or 201

You must complete additional checks, if you are unable to contact 2 or more referees, for example, a letter or email has been returned because they are not at that address or they have not responded to any letters sent to them, asking for more information.

Related content

[Contents](#)

AMS: Contact the referee

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners working on the Application Management system (AMS), how we contact a referee, the timescale we allow for a referee confirming a customer's identity to respond, and how the referee can reply to us.

You, the examiner, may need to contact the referee as part of the application. Before you contact them, you must check [they are acceptable](#) and genuine.

When dealing with an application on AMS, you must contact a referee if you need:

- [confirmation they countersigned an application](#) (a letter 200)
- [more information](#) (by phone, email or letter 201)
- a response to letter 920

Any contact made must be by phone or email in the first instance, before post.

AMS: check a person acted as referee (letter 200)

If you need to check a referee completed an application (known as the letter 200), for example, if the confirming identity checks guidance tell you to, you must:

1. Check their details, including their address and phone number in outside reference sources.
2. Check they are [acceptable to confirm a customer's identity](#) in line with [guidance](#).
3. Send letter 200, by email or post.
4. Remove the customer's or child's name from the letter.
5. Follow the referee: [response times to letters and emails](#) if you do not get a response from the referee.

AMS: when we need more information (phone, email or letter 201)

If you need more information to confirm if a referee is acceptable, you must:

1. Check their details, including their address and phone number using outside reference sources.
2. Examine them using this guidance.
3. Contact them by:
 - [phone](#)
 - [email](#)
 - [post](#)
4. Follow the referee: [response times to letters and emails](#), if you do not get a response from the referee.

AMS: Paper referee (1 page form): no response to a letter 920

If you (the examiner) are dealing with a paper referee (1 page form) but have not received a response to the additional questions in letter 920, you must:

1. Check the referee's details, including their address and phone number in outside reference sources.
2. Examine the referee.
3. Send the referee letter 200 including the phrase 200C and 200D.
4. Follow the referee: [response times to letters and emails](#).

AMS: contact a referee by phone

You may contact the referee by phone to confirm:

- how they know the customer
- how long they have known the customer
- their profession
- their professional qualifications
- their passport number
- if they have had a passport in any other name

When you contact the referee by phone you must:

- check their phone number using outside reference sources
- confirm the person you are speaking to is the referee
- tell them we are making checks on an application where they are the referee
- not tell them who the customer is (for security reasons)
- not tell them the customer's name as this defeats the purpose – we expect the person acting as referee to be able to confirm the application and customer's details
- if there is no answer from a referee, follow the how to contact customers by phone guidance

If you are dealing with an urgent or compassionate application, you must contact the referee by phone, if you are certain they can correctly identify the customer.

AMS: contact a referee by email

When contacting a referee by email, you must send it from your team email address and not your personal email address.

Before you contact a referee, you must check the email address on the 1 page paper referee form, SE04 or OS paper application form matches the one on the system, if it does not, you must change it.

If you are working on AMS, you must:

- manually enter the referee's email address from the 1 page paper referee form, onto the AMS system (it is not scanned on)
- use the AMS applications: how to send emails guidance, to send a letter, by email, to the referee

AMS: dealing with a referee's email response

You may accept email responses from a referee, in line with the Electronic Communications Act 2000, that:

- do not have physical signatures
- come from the email address we have on the customer's application

If the email has not come from the email address on the customer's application, you must reject the response and request for a postal response with a wet signature and date.

When you are working on AMS and get an email response, you must:

1. Add a case note to confirm you received it.
2. Scan the email on the system as a permanent record.

Referee: contact by post

When you contact a referee by post you must follow the sending a letter guidance.

Referee: contact by fax

Some referees may contact us by fax, which you must accept. You must treat their response as if they sent it to you as a letter in the post.

Referee on AMS: response times to letters and emails

If you are waiting for a response from a referee, you must:

1. Send the letter by post or email to the referee and allow them 28 days to respond.
2. 14 days after the first letter, send the same letter again by post, asking them to respond.
3. After 14 days of the second letter, see [Unable to contact the referee](#).

If you do not receive a response from the referee, you must reject them and ask the customer for a new referee.

Referee on AMS: unable to contact the referee

If you are unable to contact a referee, for example, a letter or email has been returned because they are not at that address or they have not responded to letters sent to them, you must:

- reject them and [ask the customer for a new referee](#) to confirm their identity
- refer to EAC (Enhanced Application Checking), if you have fraud or safeguarding concerns

Two referees do not respond to the letter 200 or 201

You must refer an application to EAC, if you are unable to contact 2 or more referees, for example, a letter or email has been returned because they are not at that address or they have not responded to any letters sent to them, asking for more information.

An EAC examiner must deal with these applications using the EAC: dealing with Enhanced Application Checking referrals guidance.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Asking for a new referee

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners how to ask the customer for a new referee if we rejected their original one or they did not provide one.

You, the examiner, may decide to ask for a referee or a new referee to confirm a customer's identity (for example, if the referee does not meet the criteria). What you must send depends on whether you are:

- processing on DAP (Digital Application Processing) or AMS (Application Management System)
- requesting a new digital referee, paper referee (1 page form) or paper referee (countersignature)

AMS: how to ask for a new paper referee (countersignature)

You may need to ask the customer for a new referee if you are processing on AMS. This may be to:

- replace a paper referee (countersignature)
- ask for a referee because the customer, who applied using a paper form, did not originally provide one

You must:

1. Send by post, to the customer, a blank paper SE04 or OS application form and the correct letter:
 - 170 (if you reject a paper referee and need a new one)
 - 172 (if you reject a paper referee and need a new one and there are multiple applications from the same address)
 - 171 (if you need to send a warning letter to confirm the paper referee is forged)
 - 274 (if an adult application form is incomplete)
 - 276 (if a child application form is incomplete)
2. Store the application in your team, while you wait for the customer to respond.

When you get the new application, you must:

1. Send it to Sopra Steria Ltd and ask them to scan it on the system.
2. Check the paper referee (countersignature) is genuine and examine the paper referee (countersignature).

AMS: how to ask for a new paper referee (1 page form)

You may need to ask the customer for a new referee if you are processing on AMS. This may be to:

- replace a digital referee
- replace a paper referee (1 page form)
- ask for a referee because the customer, who applied online, did not originally provide one

You cannot use AMS to ask for a new digital referee (including if the application has been transferred from DAP) because AMS does not have the functionality to do this. You must ask the customer to provide a paper referee (1 page form), by sending them, by email:

- letter 918; or
- letter 920 (if it is a child application); and
- a paper referee (1 page form) (that you can print from AMS using the **Print Csig form** button)

When AMS prints the paper referee (1 page form), it will pre-populate the form with the customer's details shown on the application:

- reference (barcode) number
- forename and surname
- date and place of birth
- telephone number
- address
- photo

The customer must return the form to us when it is completed (in hard copy). However, if you are dealing with an application on AMS to renew a British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport and need a paper referee, you can accept a completed paper referee (1 page form) form sent to you from the customer by email.

If the customer does not reply to our request, you must follow the withdrawing passport application guidance.

DAP: how to ask for a digital or paper referee

You may need to ask the customer for a referee if you are processing on DAP. This may be to:

- replace a digital or paper referee
- ask for a referee because the customer, who applied online, did not originally provide one
- ask for a new referee because the original referee information is incomplete
- ask for a referee (if customer has not provided one) when:
 - you compare the customer's photo to their child photo in their old passport
 - you cannot confirm the customer's identity from their previous photo

If you need to ask the customer for a referee, you must select either:

- **ask the customer for a referee** if a referee has not been provided
- **No, ask applicant for a new referee** if the referee does not meet the criteria

DAP will automatically send the request and reminders to the customer. If they do not provide a referee their application can be withdrawn.

For digital applications (customers who applied online) the customer can provide either a digital referee or a paper referee (1 page form).

For paper (SE04 or OS) applications, DAP will send the new referee request by posting a (hard copy) printed 1 page form to the customer (pre-populated with their details & photo) with a cover letter for the customer and the referee. Customers who applied using a paper form can only provide a paper referee (1 page form) if we ask for a new referee.

If the customer provides a mobile number or email address, then we will send a text message or email to tell the customer that a:

- referee is required
- form has been sent to them (if we have sent them a paper form)

Related content

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