



Home Office

# Faulty passports

Version 16.0

Guidance for His Majesty's Passport Office staff explaining how to deal with faulty passports.

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# About: Faulty passports

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to deal with faulty passports.

## 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 **16.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **3 November 2025**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated in the section:

- [CSMT: passport is faulty \(more than 12 months validity\)](#) to tell the Customer Service Management Team (CSMT) the new process for uploading documents onto DAP (Digital Application Processing)
- [Examine an application with a faulty passport](#) to tell examiners to add observation OBTP when issuing a replacement passport

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# What is a faulty passport

This section tells HM Passport Office staff what a faulty passport is and how we deal with them.

A faulty passport is when there is a fault with the manufacture of the passport itself, for example: the passport has

- a faulty chip
- an unreadable MRZ strip
- a quality issue with the printing or the book itself (such as, the laminate is poorly applied, smudged text, misaligned pages)

This list gives an example of faults a passport can have. It is not a complete list, and every passport must be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine if they are faulty or damaged.

It is not a faulty passport when there is:

- damage to the passport meaning the customer cannot use it as proof of identity
- an error on the passport (for example, a spelling error, wrong name, or date of birth)

If the passport is damaged (which has caused the fault) or there are any signs of tampering with the passport's chip, MRZ strip, laminate, photos, personal details, you must deal with it using the damaged British passports guidance.

## Paying a fee to replace a faulty passport

If the passport is confirmed to be faulty, the passport must be replaced, free of charge, with either:

- the same expiry date as the faulty passport, if the passport was issued more than 28 days ago; or,
- full validity, if the passport was issued in the last 28 days

If the customer is entitled to a gratis passport and has paid the fee, you must arrange a refund.

The customer must pay the full fee for a new passport if:

- the faulty passport has less than 12 months validity left, because we cannot issue a passport with less than 12 months validity
- their faulty passport was issued more than 28 days ago and they want a new passport with full validity to replace it (a gratis passport will only be issued

with full validity if the original faulty passport has been issued within the last 28 days)

## Customers with urgent travel

A customer may call the Contact Centre and tell us:

- they have a faulty passport; and,
- they have travel booked in the next 4 weeks; and,
- they can provide evidence of their travel

The Contact Centre will send the customer's details to the Customer Service Management team (CSMT).

## CSMT: dealing with an urgent faulty passport request

When you, the CSMT staff member, receive the customer's details from the Contact Centre, you must:

1. Contact the customer by phone, to confirm the urgency of the travel.
2. Tell the customer:
  - they will need to attend a Customer Service Centre (CSC), bringing their faulty passport and evidence they are travelling; and,
  - a member of the CSC counter team will contact them to arrange an appointment
3. Record the details of the faulty passport on the Urgent gratis log, as a faulty chip.

The CSC counter managers will monitor the Urgent gratis log in each location and contact the customer to arrange for them to attend the counter.

## Counter: dealing with an urgent faulty passport request

When you, the CSC counter manager, identify an application from the Urgent gratis log, you must contact the customer and arrange an appointment for them.

When the customer attends their appointment, a counter examiner will check for the suspected fault using a passport reader.

If you, the counter examiner, test the passport and find a fault, you must follow [How counter staff deal with a faulty passport](#) guidance.

If the passport is not faulty, you must:

1. Return the passport to the customer.
2. Tell the customer:
  - their passport is not faulty; and,
  - they will receive a letter from us to confirm this

3. Update the Urgent gratis log to confirm you have tested the passport and confirmed it is not faulty.

CSMT will monitor the Urgent gratis log and issue the customer with a Microchip checked offline letter to confirm their passport is not faulty.

If the customer has paid the fee for the appointment, CSMT will refund the fee if the passport is found to be faulty and is not damaged. For example, they may have booked and paid for an appointment themselves online without contacting HM Passport Office to ask what to do.

## **Related content**

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# How a customer reports a faulty passport

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how to deal with contact from a customer about faulty passports.

A customer can report a faulty passport, by phone, email, letter or attending one of our public counter offices.

## Reporting a faulty passport: by phone

If a customer phones our Contact Centres about a faulty passport and they do not have travel booked in the next 4 weeks, they will tell the customer to:

1. Write a letter explaining:
  - what the fault is
  - how they found out about the fault
2. Send the letter with their passport to:

Faulty passports  
HM Passport Office  
PO Box 767  
Southport  
PR8 9PW

When the Customer Service Management team (CSMT) receive the passport, how they will deal with the passport depends on if the passport is faulty or damaged. See, [How CSMT deal with a faulty passport](#).

If a customer has travel booked in the next 4 weeks, the Contact Centre will transfer the call to CSMT (see [Customers with urgent travel](#)).

## Reporting a faulty passport: by post or email

If a customer sends in correspondence about a faulty passport (by post or email), it must be sent to the Customer Service Management team (CSMT) who will contact the customer.

If the Document Handling Unit (DHU) receives a faulty passport and the suppliers cannot immediately link it to a live passport application, they will record the document to be dealt with as an orphan document.

## Reporting a faulty passport: by applying

A customer may submit a new passport application to replace a faulty passport.



If you, the examiner, receive an application to replace a faulty passport, you must follow the guidance for [processing the application on the DAP \(Digital Application Processing\) system](#).

## Reporting a faulty passport: at the public counter reception

If a customer attends our counter offices without a pre-booked online appointment and they do not have evidence they have urgent travel within 4 weeks, our security will not allow them into the office.

If they do have evidence of urgent travel and the customer tells us their passport is faulty, you, the counter receptionist must:

1. Look at the passport and check for signs of damage
  - if the passport is damaged you must follow the damaged passport guidance and tell the customer to make an online appointment themselves
2. Check the details in the passport match the passport record.
3. Test the passport on the passport reader and check if the passport is faulty.
4. Add a passport note to passport records to confirm the passport is faulty or not.

If the passport is found to be:

- faulty, you must deal with the customer using the Gratis passport applications and urgent government or compassionate travel with no appointment guidance for the passport to be replaced
- not faulty, you must provide a letter confirming we have checked the passport and it is working properly

Where the passport is found to be faulty and not damaged, the customer will be refunded if they have paid the fee for the appointment. For example, they have booked an appointment themselves online to attend an office without contacting HM Passport Office beforehand to ask what to do.

## Reporting a faulty passport: to a counter examiner

When a customer attends the counter for an appointment to renew or replace their faulty passport, they may have:

- attended the office, without booking an appointment and the counter receptionist has confirmed their passport is faulty; or,
- been asked to attend a counter appointment by a counter manager, if they have reported their passport as faulty to the Contact Centre and CSMT; or,
- booked and paid to attend a Premium or Fast track appointment to renew or replace their passport

You must follow the guidance for [How counter staff deal with a faulty passport](#).

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# How counter staff deal with a faulty passport

This section tells HM Passport Office counter staff how to deal with an application to replace a faulty passport on DAP when the customer has applied using a counter service.

Where the customer tells you, the counter examiner, their passport is faulty, you must check passport records for a passport note added by the counter receptionist or Customer Services Management team (CSMT) officer, confirming it is faulty.

If there is a passport note confirming the passport is faulty, you must continue with the appointment.

If the customer tells you their passport is faulty and there is no passport note on passport records, you must:

1. Look at the passport and check for signs of damage, if the passport is damaged you must follow the damaged passport guidance.
2. Check the details in the passport match the passport record.
3. Test the passport on the passport reader and check if the passport is faulty.

If the passport is:

- faulty, you must ask the customer if they want to replace the passport with a new one that has:
  - the same expiry date as the faulty passport, free of charge (see Gratis passport applications). If the customer has paid the fee, you must arrange a refund; or,
  - full validity, free of charge (see Gratis passport applications), if the faulty passport was issued within the last 28 days; or,
  - full validity, paying the relevant fee. This must be done if the faulty passport has less than 12 months validity left or if the customer wants their new passport to have full validity but the original faulty passport was issued more than 28 days ago
- not faulty, you must ask the customer if they want:
  - to continue with the application to replace the passport and receive a new passport with full validity (they will not receive a refund for the fee paid); or,
  - us to not continue with the application and provide a letter confirming we have checked the passport and it is working properly. If they choose this, the customer must receive a refund

If the customer's passport is faulty, they have urgent travel booked and they meet the criteria for a gratis passport application, you must:

1. Issue the customer with a Digital gratis application link.

2. Tell the customer to complete the gratis application in the waiting area.
3. Follow the urgent government business or compassionate reasons guidance, when the customer has completed their gratis application.

If the customer is not eligible for a gratis passport or their passport is not found to be faulty, but they want to continue with their application, you must retain the documents and transfer the application to the national queue.

In addition to the standard validation process, you must record on the passport validation screens if:

- you have tested the passport using the passport reader, and the result
- we accepted the passport as being faulty and does not show signs of damage
- the passport was not found to be faulty, and any signs of damage

You must also add case notes (or a passport note if there is no live application) to show:

- if the customer was told the passport is faulty
- if the passport has been to CSMT for investigation (for example, there was already a passport note on passport records showing they checked it)
- you are sending the passport to CSMT, if it is faulty
- the customer has paid the fee, and we are replacing the passport with full validity because:
  - there is less than 12 months validity
  - the customer wants a new passport

You must add these case notes to either:

- one of the DAP tasks you process (if you are going to complete processing at the counter)
- the **I cannot complete the application** case note field (if you are referring the application to the national queue)

You must not return the passport to the customer if you found it to be faulty. You must leave the passport physically uncanceled and send the passport to CSMT.

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# How CSMT deal with a faulty passport

This section tells HM Passport Office Customer Service Management team (CSMT) how to deal with faulty passports.

The Customer Service Management team (CSMT) may find out about a faulty passport when the customer:

- sends their passport to CSMT by post, as they believe it may be faulty; or,
- calls the Contact Centre to report a faulty passport, and the advisor has transferred the call to CSMT (due to urgent travel)

## CSMT: customer has sent their passport by post

When you, the CSMT officer, receive a faulty passport from a customer or examiner, you must, on the day you receive the passport:

1. Add a passport note to passport records to confirm we have received the passport and it is waiting on checks to confirm if it is faulty.
2. Look to see if the customer has provided evidence of urgent travel (within the next 4 weeks).

Then you must, within 2 weeks (or 24 hours, if they have urgent travel):

3. Look at the passport and check for signs of damage.
4. Check the details in the passport match the passport record.
5. Test the passport on the passport reader.
6. Contact the customer, by phone, to tell them the passport has been received and tested.
7. Tell the customer what actions you will take depending on if the passport is:
  - [not faulty](#)
  - [not faulty but it has been replaced by a new passport](#)
  - [faulty and has more than 12 months validity left](#)
  - [faulty and has less than 12 months validity left](#)
  - [faulty and is damaged](#)
  - [faulty and has been replaced by a new passport](#)

## CSMT: customer has urgent travel

If the customer has told us they have urgent travel, you must follow [CSMT: dealing with an urgent faulty passport request](#).

If the passport is not faulty, see [CSMT: passport is not faulty](#).

## CSMT: faulty passport received from the counter

If you receive a faulty passport from the counter and they have confirmed the passport is faulty, you must [send the faulty passport to the supplier](#) for investigation.

## CSMT: passport is not faulty

If the passport is confirmed to be not faulty, you must:

1. Add a passport note to passport records to confirm the passport is not faulty and it is being returned to the customer.
2. Return the passport to the customer with a letter to confirm the microchip is working as expected.

## CSMT: passport is not faulty but replaced by new passport

If the passport is confirmed to be not faulty but the system shows the customer has already applied to replace it, paid the fee, and received a new passport, you must:

1. Add a passport note to passport records to confirm the passport is not faulty but has since been replaced.
2. Physically cancel the passport.
3. Check the passport has been cancelled electronically.
4. Send the passport back to the customer with a letter to tell them the passport was not faulty, adding that the passport has been replaced by a new passport.

## CSMT: passport is faulty (more than 12 months validity)

If the passport is faulty and there is more than 12 months validity, you must:

1. Add a passport note to passport records to confirm the passport is faulty and:
  - it has been tested using a passport reader, confirming it is faulty and has no damage; and,
  - will be sent to the supplier for investigation; and,
  - will be replaced and the new passport will have the same expiry date (or full validity, if the faulty passport was issued within the last 28 days); and,
  - you have sent the customer a digital gratis application link so we can replace the passport
2. Follow the Gratis passport applications guidance to issue a digital gratis application link to the customer and record the details on the Gratis application log.

You, the CSMT operational team leader (OTL), must monitor the gratis admin tool to confirm when the customer has applied using their digital gratis application link.

When the customer has applied using their digital gratis application link, you must:

1. Access the gratis application on DAP.
2. Select **Record customer enquiry** from the **What do you want to do?** screen.

3. Select the **Documents** tab.
4. Select **Add passport**.
5. Record the customer's passport number.
6. Select **Yes** or **No** to confirm if the customer's passport passes the validation checks (you must record any damage to the passport (outside of normal wear and tear) if it does not pass the validation checks).
7. Select **Save**.
8. Add the previous passport details to the Faulty Passports log.
9. [Send the faulty passport to the supplier](#) for investigation.

## CSMT: passport is faulty (less than 12 months validity)

If the passport is faulty and has less than 12 months validity, we cannot replace the passport free of charge as we cannot issue a passport with less than 12 months validity.

You must ask the customer to apply and pay the relevant fee, for us to issue a full validity passport.

## CSMT: passport is faulty and is damaged

If the passport is faulty and shows signs of damage (which has caused the fault), for example, the customer has bent the passport and that has damaged the passport chip. You must:

1. Add a passport note to passport records to confirm it:
  - has been tested using a passport reader
  - is faulty and the damage which has caused the fault
  - will be replaced with a new passport
2. Return the passport with letter 115.
3. Ask that the customer applies for a new passport.

## CSMT: passport is faulty and has been replaced by a new passport

If the passport is faulty but the system shows the customer has already applied to replace it, paid the fee and has received a new passport, you, the CSMT officer must:

1. Physically cancel the passport.
2. Check the passport has been cancelled electronically.
3. Place the passport in confidential waste.
4. Send letter 116 to the customer to confirm the passport was faulty and has been replaced.
5. Check the application to see if the customer requires a refund. If the examiner has issued a passport with:
  - the same expiry date as the faulty passport, check the examiner has refunded the fee paid. If not, you must arrange a refund
  - full validity, the customer does not get a refund

## CSMT: a faulty passport is returned by the supplier

If a faulty passport is returned to CSMT by the supplier and passport records show a replacement passport has already been issued, you must:

1. Add a passport note, explaining the response from the supplier.
2. Check the passport is cancelled on passport records.
3. Physically cancel the passport.
4. See if we can return the passport to the customer using the [Returning a faulty passport to the customer](#) section.

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# Examine an application with a faulty passport

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners how to deal with applications with a faulty passport.

You, the examiner, can receive an application to replace a faulty passport, directly from a customer (by applying) or from the Customer Service Management team (CSMT).

If a customer applies directly and sends in an application, photos, and fee, they may tell us the passport is faulty by sending in a letter with their passport or in the additional information section of the application.

When dealing with an application, you must check to see if the customer has asked for:

- us to return the passport to them
- a copy of a valid or expired visa in the passport

If the application has come from CSMT, there will be no passport with the application as they send the passport to our suppliers for investigation. There will be a note on the passport record to confirm this.

## Returning a faulty passport to the customer

We will not return a faulty passport to the customer, if it:

- appears to have been fraudulent tampering
- is newly issued and the customer received it already faulty

If you intend to destroy the customer's faulty passport you must add a passport note, explaining why you are not returning it.

If you are dealing with the application on Digital Application Processing (DAP), you must send the faulty passport to confidential waste using Application Receive Domain (ARD).

We return passports to the customer in most cases, this follows an Ombudsman review in 2006 which found:

- the customer expected to receive their old passport and raised a complaint when they did not receive it
- there were no benefits in securely destroying the document on site

If the customer has asked for us to return the faulty passport to them, you must tell them we can ask for the company who supply the passports to return the passport after investigation, but they may not be able to return the passport depending on the fault.

## Faulty passport has a visa

If the customer has requested a copy of valid or expired visas in the faulty passport, you must:

- send a photocopy of the visas to them
- tell them if they need to replace a visa, they must contact the relevant embassy or consulate to replace it themselves, we cannot do it on their behalf
  - if the customer tells us they will have to pay to replace the visa, they must contact CSMT

## DAP: deal with an application with a potential faulty passport

If you, the examiner, receive an application on DAP to replace a faulty passport and there is no passport note or case note to confirm it is faulty (from CSMT or counter staff), you, the DAP examiner, must check the details in the passport match the passport record.

You must ask the Embedded Civil Servant (ECS) in the DHU (Document Handling Unit) to check the passport.

You must:

1. Access Application Receive Domain (ARD).
2. Request revalidation of the passport and tell the ECS in the request they must check if the passport is faulty.

ARD will send the revalidation request to an ECS in the DHU.

The ECS will:

1. Check if the passport is faulty using a passport scanner in the DHU.
2. Update the validation outcome on ARD.

When, you receive the result of the revalidation check, you must follow either:

- [DAP: deal with an application with a passport \(confirmed to be faulty\)](#) – if the passport is confirmed as faulty
- [DAP: deal with an application with a passport \(not faulty\)](#) – if the passport is confirmed to not be faulty

## DAP: deal with an application with a passport (confirmed to be faulty)

You, the DAP examiner, can continue to process the application on DAP if you receive an application to replace a faulty passport and:

- the passport is confirmed to be faulty by:
  - CSMT or counter staff putting a passport note on the customer's passport
  - the DHU through the revalidation check

You must:

1. Process the application to issue a new passport.
2. Add a passport note to the passport being replaced confirming all actions and decisions made. For example, the passport was received as part of an application and has been confirmed as faulty.
3. Issue either a fully valid replacement passport (if the faulty passport has less than 12 months validity), or a replacement passport with an expiry date that matches that of the faulty passport (if the faulty passport has more than 12 months validity).
4. Add the validity observation OBTP, if issuing a replacement passport with less than the full 10 year validity.
5. Issue a refund to the customer (if the customer paid the fee and the system shows the application is not free of charge (gratis)), if you are issuing a passport with an expiry date that matches that of the faulty passport.
6. Update the ARD handling instructions if the passport is in the DHU, to tell them to:
  - not cancel the passport
  - send the faulty passport to the CSMT
7. Contact the customer to confirm their old passport is being sent to be tested and they will be contacted after this is completed. We must send the passport to CSMT to find out if the fault is a manufacturing issue.

## DAP: deal with an application with a passport (not faulty)

If the passport is confirmed to not be faulty, you must:

1. Process the application to issue a new passport.
2. Add a passport note to the passport confirming all actions and decisions made, for example, the passport was tested by DHU and confirmed to not be faulty.

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