



Home Office

# Old Blue (hardback style) passports

**Version 18.0**

This document provides guidance on how His Majesty's Passport Office examiners process the renewal and replacement of Old Blue (hardback style) passports on DAP (Digital Application Processing).

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# About: Old Blue (hardback style) passports

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners how to process a passport application (submitted in the UK or from abroad) to renew or replace an Old Blue (hardback style) passport on DAP (Digital Application Processing).

This guidance does not apply to British national (overseas) BN(O) customers renewing or replacing an Old Blue passport we can find on our records (Passport Data services, G-Search, Old Blue records and the Hong Kong historic database). Instead, you must refer to the BN(O) guidance.

## 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 **18.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **18 February 2026**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated in the section [Customer has provided documents and evidence issued before the Old Blue passport](#), to tell examiners they need to send a comms builder letter to the customer, if they have not responded to the request for documents and evidence within 7 days of a successful phone call.

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# Old Blue (hardback style) passports

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners why applications to renew or replace Old Blue passports must be processed as first time adult applications. It includes what the customer must do to renew or replace their Old Blue passport.

Old Blue passports were handwritten and last issued in 1992. Unlike passports today, customers' photos were not kept on the index card record. With improvements in technology and fraud prevention, recent passports are more robust and secure.

HM Passport Office will not accept Old Blue passports as the only evidence of a customer's identity or nationality, as:

- there is a significant risk of identity theft due to:
  - the length of time since we issued the customer a passport
  - the possibility that the customer's appearance may have changed considerably since we last issued them a passport
- these types of passports can be easily forged

You must be satisfied that the customer holds British nationality and the identity they claim by checking their:

- identity documents
- nationality documents
- referee verification

## What the customer must provide

The customer must:

- apply as a first time adult
- pay the correct fee
- submit passport photos that must be confirmed by a referee
- provide a referee
- supply the same documents as a first time applicant to confirm their British nationality and identity
- send their Old Blue passport to us (if they have it)
- provide details of their Old Blue passport if this is lost or stolen and they no longer have it

You, the examiner, must be satisfied the evidence the customer provides shows they:

- are a British national by birth, descent, adoption, registration, or naturalisation (for example by sending in original nationality claim documents)
- held the claimed identity from birth or from before we issued them an Old Blue passport

- can link their current name to the name on the Old Blue passport (if there has been a change in their personal details)

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# Old Blue passports: how to process a passport application

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to process a passport application to renew or replace an Old Blue passport and confirm the customer's identity and British nationality.

DAP (Digital Application Processing) examiners will be able to view a scan of the Old Blue passport using the **Documents** tab. The Document Handling Unit (DHU) will scan the Old Blue passport:

- personal details page
- photo page
- page showing the date and place of issue
- any visa page with stamps or information

HM Passport Office holds all passport and application records on Passport Data Services and compares this data against passport applications. Old Blue passports are not recorded on these records so cannot be linked to the system.

## Old Blue passports: steps to complete

To process a passport application to renew or replace an Old Blue passport, you, the examiner, must complete the following steps:

1. Process the application using the 'first time adult' [application type](#).
2. [Check our passport records](#) for details of the customer's Old Blue passport.
3. [Confirm the information](#) the customer has provided using Home Office records (for example, index cards and UK Visa and Immigration records).
4. Ask the customer [for documents](#) to confirm their identity and British nationality.
5. Confirm the customer's identity (and that the identity is still active) using their [referee](#).
6. [Refer the application to your Operational Team Leader \(OTL\)](#), if you cannot confirm identity or nationality.
7. Send the customer for an [identity interview](#) if needed, in line with the Interviews: overview of the interview process guidance.
8. [Cancel the customer's Old Blue passport](#), if you are issuing a new passport.

## Old Blue passports: DAP tasks

DAP (Digital Application Processing) will create several tasks on an application when a customer applies to renew or replace an Old Blue passport. These tasks will be created based on the first time service type, and if the customer declared the Old Blue passport when they made their application online.

If you are examining an Old Blue passport application on DAP you, the DAP examiner, must complete the tasks created by DAP.

DAP may create a:

- **Customer with a very old passport** task (created when the customer applies and tells us they have an Old Blue passport)
- **Nationality** task
- **Interview appointment** task
- **Documents received** task
- **Passport received for first time application** task
- **Received passport not on Main Index** task

DAP may create other tasks based on the evidence and the documents the customer provides and you must process these in line with the relevant guidance.

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# Old Blue passports: application type

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff the application type used to process Old Blue passport applications on DAP (Digital Application Processing).

You must process the renewal or replacement of an Old Blue passport as a first time application.

If the customer's Old Blue passport is lost or stolen, you must process this as a first time adult. As Old Blue passports do not have an electronic record on passport and application records, DCS (Digital Customer Service) will not ask the customer to report a missing Old Blue passport and you, the examiner, must not create an LS (lost and stolen) record.

Customers who apply online using DCS to renew or replace their Old Blue passport are automatically guided to complete a first time adult application based on the previous passport information they provide. Guidance tells customers completing the paper form to apply as a first time customer.

If you receive an application to renew or replace an Old Blue passport, the application type will be first time if the customer has completed their details correctly.

DAP does not yet have the functionality to change the application type to first time. If you, the DAP examiner, need to change the application type to first time, you must select **I cannot do this application** and **Cannot change application type to first time**. DAP will transfer the application to the Exceptions Handling team (EHT) and create a **Cannot change application type to first time** task. The EHT will follow their guidance to process the renewal or replacement of the Old Blue passport.

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# Old Blue passports: checking the passport record

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to confirm the customer's Old Blue passport details.

You, the examiner, must check the customer's personal details and nationality status on the documents they provide and on their Old Blue passport (if they send it in) against the information recorded on the previous passport application. You must do this by completing a:

- manual index search (MIS) request form
- index card archive search
- Hong Kong database search

You can complete an index card archive search or Hong Kong database search yourself if you have access to these. If you do not have access to the index card archive search or the Hong Kong database search, you must ask a colleague with access to complete these checks.

You must request a MIS by sending a completed form to the Peterborough search team if:

- you and your colleagues do not have access to the index card archive search
- you do not know the date of issue for the Old Blue passport
- the passport was issued between 1929 to 1971

See Searches and checks: manual index checks for details of how to complete this search.

You must case note the results of any searches completed on the customer's application. You must not upload a copy of the index card to the application.

## Case noting Old Blue passport details

You, the examiner, must case note the:

1. Old Blue passport number and the date and place it was issued.
2. Customer's full name as it appears on the Old Blue passport (if it has been provided) and on the original passport record.
3. Results of your passport record search.
4. Customer's British nationality status, as shown on the passport record and update it (if necessary) to reflect current British nationality laws.

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# Old Blue passports: checking a customer's documents and evidence

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to confirm a customer's identity and British nationality when they apply to renew or replace an Old Blue passport on DAP (Digital Application Processing).

You must confirm the customer's identity and claim to a British passport, by checking the following documents and evidence:

- the customer's nationality documents (for example, birth certificates, marriage certificates, nationality certificates).
- the information on the passport application (for example, parent details if they are provided, and the details confirmed by the referee).
- the customer's claim matches the information in our passport records.
- UK Visa & Immigration records (if necessary).
- Consular birth records (if necessary).
- the customer is the genuine holder of the identity.
- the customer held the identity before the issue of the Old Blue passport, for example, by providing documents issued before the Old Blue passport was issued.

## Examining the customer's documents and evidence

You must check the customer's identity and nationality documents to make sure they are acceptable for passport purposes, using Knowledge Base where necessary.

If a customer can only provide documents or evidence dated after the Old Blue passport was issued, you the examiner, must refer the application to your [Operational Team Leader \(OTL\)](#).

## Customer has provided documents and evidence issued before the Old Blue passport

A customer must provide us with documents and evidence issued before their Old Blue passport, so we can confirm they are the genuine holder of the identity.

If the customer has provided documents or evidence issued before their Old Blue passport, you must:

1. Complete additional checks on the application if required.
2. Continue to process the application in line with this guidance.

## Customer has not provided documents and evidence issued before the Old Blue passport

If the customer has not provided documents or evidence issued before their Old Blue passport was printed, you must:

1. Check the customer's original passport record against their identity and nationality documents and case note the details on their application.
2. Phone the customer to ask if they can provide any original documents (for example, their original short birth certificate if they have provided a full birth certificate).
3. Put the application on hold for 7 days, so the customer can provide the documents we need.

Where the customer has agreed to send us their documents, the customer must send them to either:

- Corby DHU; or,
- Hemel Hempstead DHU

The addresses for these DHUs are:

HM Passport Office  
Long Croft Road  
Corby  
NN18 8UA

HM Passport Office  
Three Cherry Trees Lane  
Hemel Hempstead  
HP2 7HQ

You must send an Old Blue and other passports not on main index letter using Comms Builder, asking for the original documents or additional evidence, if either:

- you are unable to contact the customer by phone to request original or additional evidence; or,
- you have not received the documents from the customer following the phone call, and the 7 day application hold period has ended

Where the customer tells you they are unable to provide original documents, you must:

1. Ask them to provide additional evidence to confirm their identity before the Old Blue passport was issued. See, Supporting documents not available.
2. Add a case note, to record:
  - your conversation with the customer and what they agreed to send; and,
  - your actions taken so far and recommendations

You must case note your decision and refer the application to your operational team leader (OTL), if the customer cannot provide any documents or additional evidence issued before the Old Blue passport. See, [Old Blue passports: referring to your OTL](#).

You, the [OTL, must review the application](#) and make a balance of probability decision.

DAP will automatically send reminders and withdraw the application if the customer does not reply to our letters.

## Customer's parent(s) details

We use the customer's parents' details to help confirm the customer's nationality and identity if needed. If the parents' details are not needed (for example, their nationality is not dependent on their parents, and you are already able to confirm the customer's identity) you must not request the evidence if it has not been provided.

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# Old Blue passports: contacting a referee

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff when and how to contact a referee when you are processing an application to renew or replace an Old Blue passport.

As we process Old Blue passports as first time applications you, the examiner, must always examine the referee. If a referee has not been provided, you must ask the customer to provide one.

You may need to contact the referee to confirm the customer's identity. When and how you contact the referee will depend on the type of referee provided.

## Contacting the digital referee or paper referee (1 page form)

You must examine the digital referee or paper referee (1 page form).

You, the examiner, must check the referee. If the referee has answered false (or 'NO') to any of the questions you must use the referee guidance to decide if you must:

- reject the referee
- contact the referee for more information
- contact the customer for a new referee
- refer the application for investigation to the Public Protection

You do not need to send a system 200 letter to a digital referee or paper referee (1 page form) because the system prompts them to answer questions about the customer's:

- photo
- address
- parental details

## Contacting the paper referee (countersignature)

You must examine the paper referee (countersignature).

You must send the paper referee (countersignature) a system 200 letter if you are not sending the customer for an identity interview. We do not send customers for interview when:

- we confirm their Old Blue passport record (because their nationality, identity and entitlement are not in doubt)

- they are over 70 years old (because we do not routinely interview customers over 70 years old unless we have fraud concerns)

## Sending the referee a system 200 letter

As a paper referee (countersignature) is not asked the same questions as a digital or paper referee (1 page form), we need additional information to confirm the customer's identity. The paper referee (countersignature) must confirm the details we need by replying to a system 200 letter.

When you have received an acceptable reply, you must:

1. Record their reply in a case note.
2. Scan their reply as a permanent record on the system.

If you have received a reply that is not acceptable, you must contact the referee and ask them to provide further information.

If the paper referee (countersignature) does not respond to our letters or emails, you must:

1. Ask the customer for a new paper referee (countersignature).
2. Complete confirming identity checks again on the new paper referee (countersignature).

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# Old Blue passports: referring to your OTL

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff when to refer an Old Blue passport application to an Operational Team Leader (OTL) and what the OTL must do with the application.

You, the examiner must refer an Old Blue passport application to an OTL if you cannot confirm a customer's identity or nationality.

You, the OTL, must decide if you have enough evidence to confirm the customer's identity and nationality.

## When to refer an Old Blue passport application to an OTL

When you have completed all your checks, considered all the information, documents and evidence available, and case noted your actions and results, you must refer the application to an Operational Team Leader (OTL) when:

- the customer is unable to provide the standard documents used for first time passport applications in the UK and abroad
- the customer cannot provide any documents that were issued before the Old Blue passport
- you are unable to confirm the customer's claim to British nationality
- you are unable to confirm the customer's identity
- you have suspicions or evidence that the application is fraudulent

You must always record a case note on the passport application to explain your recommendations and your reasons for referring the application to your OTL.

## What the OTL must do with a referred Old Blue application

You, the Operational Team Leader (OTL), must decide on the examiner's referred application. To do this, you must:

1. Consider the examiner's recommendation.
2. Decide if you have enough evidence to confirm the customer's identity and nationality.
3. Check the application, documents, and evidence.
4. Read the examiner's case notes.
5. Case note your decision about the passport application and either:
  - o return the application to the examiner if your decision is to issue a passport
  - o contact the customer to request alternative evidence or additional information if necessary
  - o discuss the application with your local Quality Examination Support team (QuEst)

- o refer the application to the Public Protection

## Customer's identity and nationality confirmed

If you can confirm the customer is the genuine holder of identity and is still entitled to a British passport you must case note your decision to issue the passport application and return it to the examiner to issue the passport.

## Customer's identity not confirmed

If you are unable to confirm the customer's identity you must consider what additional information or alternative evidence, you can ask for to confirm their identity.

If the customer is unable to provide additional identity documents, you must make your decision based on a balance of probability and case note your decision and your reason for making it.

## Customer's nationality not confirmed

If you are unable to confirm the customer's nationality you must consider asking the customer for alternative evidence. If you are unable to decide based on the alternative evidence you receive, you must discuss the application with your local Quality Examination Support team (QuEst) to help you with your decision making, based on a balance of probability.

HM Passport Office will only accept alternative evidence if the customer provides information that we can confirm from government records or other overseas authorities.

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# Refusing to issue a new passport

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff when they must not issue the customer with a British passport when they apply to renew or replace an Old Blue passport.

You, the examiner, must not issue the customer with a British passport if:

- the customer cannot provide enough evidence to prove they are the genuine holder of the identity
- you are unable to confirm the customer's identity or nationality based on a balance of probability
- the customer has lost their claim to British nationality (for example, because of independence legislation)

You, the Operational Team Leader (OTL), must contact the customer to explain the decision not to issue them a passport and explain what will happen next (see refusing and withdrawing passport facilities).

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# Old Blue passports: cancelling the passport

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to cancel an Old Blue passport.

Before you, the DAP (Digital Application Processing) examiner, **Submit** all decisions on the tasks, you must manually update the handling instructions using the **Handling instructions** tab in ARD (Application Receive Domain) to instruct the Document Handling Unit (DHU) to cancel the Old Blue passport.

You must:

1. Select **Handling instructions**.
2. Select **Return to alternative address**.
3. Add the customer's address (this can be the same as the return documents address in DAP, if the only extra handling instruction is to cancel the Old Blue passport).
4. Select **Yes** for the question **Should the document be cancelled**.
5. Add a case note explaining the reason for the cancel instruction.
6. Save your update.

ARD will instruct the DHU to physically cancel the Old Blue passport when DAP completes the application (if you have sent the customer for interview, the passport cancellation instruction will not be sent until the interview is completed).

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# Old Blue passports: identity interviews

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff when a customer will need to attend an interview and what to do if the customer does not need to attend an interview, when you are processing an application to renew or replace an Old Blue passport.

Customers do not need to attend a standard identity interview, if all the following steps apply:

1. The customer has met all of the documentary requirements in this guidance (for example, they have provided the correct documentation or the OTL has confirmed a passport can be issued on balance of probability).
2. We have found the customer's original passport records.
3. The names, date of birth, place of birth and nationality claim details matches the information in the documents the customer sent us.
4. The customer's documents and evidence confirm they have always held the identity.
5. The referee has confirmed the customer's identity.

A customer may also not need to attend a standard identity interview, if they meet an exemption.

You must send a customer for an identity interview when:

- you cannot find a customer's passport in our records
- they are included on the Old Blue passport as a spouse or partner of the person that was issued the passport and they are applying for their first British passport

If you have doubts about the customer's identity or suspect potential fraud, you must refer the application to the Public Protection. If Public Protection suspects fraud, they may conduct additional checks and an identity interview.

You must select the correct option on the system to send, or not send, the customer to interview. If you are not sending the customer for interview you must add a case note, stating that the customer's identity and nationality details matches HM Passport Office Old Blue records and they do not need to attend an interview.

## DAP: not sending for interview

As Old Blue passport applications are processed as first time adults, DAP (Digital Application Processing) will create an **Interview appointment** task. When you, the DAP examiner, have completed the examination tasks on the application you must then process the **Interview appointment** task.

If the customer does not need to attend an interview, in the Interview appointment task you must:

1. Select **No – interview not required**.
2. Enter the reason why you are waiving the interview.
3. Select **Save**.

DAP will refer the application to your Operational Team Leader (OTL), to approve your **interview not required** decision.

## **Sent for interview: customer not required to attend**

DAP will automatically send the customer an email advising them to contact our Contact Centres to book an interview, if you send the customer for an interview in error.

If the customer contacts the Customer Service Management team (CSMT) because they believe they do not need to attend an interview, CSMT will generate an interview exemption request task to return the application to an examiner.

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