



Home Office

Identity & Passport Service

XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Reference: FOICR 23822/12

31 August 2012

Headquarters
Identity and Passport Service
Parliamentary & Correspondence
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Dear xxxxxxxxxxxx

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your e-mail of 4 August, in which you ask for information about the countersigning of passport applications. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We are now in a position to provide a full reply to your request.

I am able to disclose the information set out in the enclosed Annex.

In keeping with the Freedom of Information Act, we assume that all information can be released to the public unless it is exempt. In line with normal practice we are therefore releasing the information which you requested via the Home Office website.

I hope that this information meets your requirements. I would like to assure you that we have provided you with all relevant information that the Identity and Passport Service holds.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to the address below, quoting reference FOICR 23822/12. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

Information Access Team
Home Office
Ground Floor, Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
e-mail: FOIRequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Yours sincerely

xxxxxxx
Parliamentary & Correspondence Management Team

Annex

Freedom of Information request from xxxxxxxx (reference FOICR 23822/12)

Information requested

I work in a GP practice and would like to clarify countersigning of passports. Form states person counter signing passport has to have known the pt 2 years, if the pt has been registered with the practice for over 2 years but is not a frequent attender can the GP legally sign the document. Do you have any guidelines for the GP's to follow or any information we can give to our pt's if we are unable to sign their forms

Response

The occupation of the countersignatory will not determine whether an application will be successful or not. The aim of the countersignatory is for the passport application to be supported by a person who can confirm the identity of the applicant. That means that the countersignatory is confirming that the photograph and personal details on the application are the true details of the applicant and that the countersignatory can confirm that they personally know the applicant.

It may not be practical in a busy GP practice for the doctor to know all of his or her patients by sight. The passport is issued only under compliance with strict and high levels of security. That status is maintained by having someone known to the applicant to declare that the details on the application form and the photograph belong to the person known to them. It is expected that the countersignatory would be able to recognise the person by sight and know their identity rather than simply indicating that the applicant is one of their patients. In other words, the GP (the countersignatory) should know the applicant in a personal capacity despite the applicant being their patient.

Date

31 August 2012