



HM Passport
Office

Privacy Policy

January 2014

Privacy Policy

Introduction

This policy explains your rights as an individual when using services provided by Her Majesty's Passport Office.

Our commitment to you

Her Majesty's Passport Office (HM Passport Office) is responsible for the issue of the UK passport and for administering the civil registration process in England and Wales.

The UK passport is issued under the Royal Prerogative which is exercised by the Chief Executive of HM Passport Office on behalf of the Home Secretary. Civil registration processes are governed by statute. It is the responsibility of the Registrar General for England and Wales, who is also the Chief Executive of HM Passport Office, to oversee the processes that are delivered locally by registration officers.

A core responsibility of HM Passport Office is to protect the personal information provided by customers when they apply for passport or civil registration services.

Our aim is to safeguard and manage your personal information and ensure that it is held safely and securely to ensure that we protect your personal identity and support the wider public protection agenda of combating fraud and identity theft.

We will do that by delivering policies and processes that meet the key values of:

- **Transparency:** We will provide clear and accessible information about how and why we gather, use, retain and share personal information as well as making customers aware of how to exercise their rights to access or amend their information.
- **Trusted and Secure:** We will ensure the security and accuracy of personal information, protecting it from loss or unauthorised disclosure. We will ensure that we manage this effectively, monitoring and improving how our processes work regularly.
- **Benefits to the Citizen:** We will ensure that our management of personal information delivers benefits to the law-abiding citizen, either as an individual (e.g. by helping people travel abroad or access a service) or as a member of society (e.g. by helping protect the public). We will only share personal information with others when Ministers have agreed that such benefits exist in those circumstances, or where there is statutory provision to provide access to information.
- **Proportionality:** We will only gather personal information that is needed for carrying out our duties. We will not keep it for any longer than is necessary, ensuring that it is only seen by those who need it to do their jobs. We will only share information with others where the law allows this and we will provide the minimum amount of information necessary to achieve the benefit.
- **Value for Money:** We will ensure that we manage our data in a cost effective way so to ensure we deliver value for money to those who pay fees for our services.

We will ensure that we fulfil our legal duty to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, including meeting your rights to:

- Request a copy of the personal information we hold about you, subject to a number of exceptions under data protection and civil registration law.
- Make sure that the personal information we hold about you is accurate and ask for a correction if necessary and where legislation allows.
- Ask that your personal information gathered during the passport process is never, or is no longer, used for the purpose of direct marketing. Please note that civil registration records are records to which the public have access and it is a matter for the purchaser of that record to ensure that personal information is used lawfully.
- Ask that processing of your personal information in a way that is likely to cause you damage or distress is prevented or ceased.
- Ask that a decision which would significantly affect you should not be taken by automatic means.

How we use the personal information you provide us

The personal information we hold about you is gathered when:

- You make an application for a passport or a certificate (online or on our paper forms)
- You attend a passport interview
- We require further information from you or a third party to support your application for a passport
- You write to us or call us with a question or comment
- We receive information about your registration of a birth, death, marriage, civil partnership in England and Wales from local registrars or in the limited situations relating to areas such as members of the armed forces when the event is registered overseas
- We receive information about a parental order, adoption or gender recognition
- We require further information from you in connection with a registration event, for example, if you apply for a birth, marriage or death entry to be corrected
- You opt to take part in our research.

This information will be used, as appropriate, to enable us to:

- Verify your identity and nationality in order to make a decision on your passport application and assist in its delivery
- Create a central record of registration events and produce indexes to enable any member of the public to apply for and obtain copies of certificates
- Complete our response to any queries or comments you may have
- Improve our customer services
- In some cases, send you a text acknowledging receipt of an application, confirming successful completion of an application or to confirm an appointment, when you have provided us with a mobile telephone number.

We may request some information from other sources when you have applied for a passport or contacted us about a registration event. We will do this in order to verify information or the authenticity of supporting documents provided by you. This includes:

- Contacting a counter signatory of a passport application
- Obtaining information from other government departments or a credit reference agency
- Contacting the issuer of a supporting document provided by you with your application to ensure that it is authentic – this applies to documents issued in the UK and overseas
- If you are called for a passport interview, obtaining information from other government departments or a credit reference agency that helps the interviewer confirm your identity and that the passport application we have checked belongs to you.

Other than counter signatories, information from third parties will only be sought where there is statutory power to do so or it is expressly to prevent or detect criminal activity.

Information will be recorded as part of dealing with any applications or queries you make – for example, case notes on how we make a decision on your passport application or whether to correct a civil registration record, or audio recordings of a call made to our call centre.

When using our online services, this sometimes involves placing small amounts of information on your device, for example, computer or mobile phone. These include small files known as cookies. They cannot be used to identify you personally. Our cookies policy provides more information:

https://passportapplication.service.gov.uk/help/html/pages/10.01_07_cookies_en.html.

In addition, we may sometimes use the personal information we hold about you for a number of other purposes:

- **Customer Research:** We may contact you in order to understand if you are happy about the services we offer and to get your opinion about how such services should be run in the future. If you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose, you can let us know. Please see “Exercising other important rights about your personal information” below for information on how to do this.
- **Training and Assurance:** We may use your personal information when training our staff – primarily when training those conducting interviews or dealing with customers over the telephone. We will also review your personal information as a necessary part of conducting audits to ensure that our staff are carrying out their duties effectively and in accordance with the law.
- **Testing our systems:** We prefer to use “dummy” or anonymised data for testing our IT systems but exceptionally, we may need to use some of your personal information to assist in testing our systems effectively where no other reasonable alternative exists. In such circumstances, we ensure that the security and integrity of your data is never put at risk.
- **Statistical analysis:** In order to review the effectiveness of our services, we will collate information to measure and judge our performance. Wherever possible, we will use anonymised data to achieve this but some of your personal information may be involved in conducting such analysis where no reasonable alternative exists.

Who has access to my personal information?

HM Passport Office holds full responsibility for the protection of the personal information it holds for passport and civil registration purposes on behalf of the Home Secretary and the Registrar General for England and Wales as respective “data controllers” of that information.

Your personal information will only be available to those who have a need to see it in order to carry out their duties. We have put in place a range of policies, processes, and system controls in order to enforce this principle. Staff who have access to personal information must obtain security clearance and their activity is subject to random audit and review. Third party access will always be subject to statutory or common law powers before access would be allowed. Copies of civil registration certificates are available to any member of the public on demand on payment of the appropriate fee. Bulk access to civil registration records would require a statutory power to be in place.

A number of other organisations are contracted by or subject to agreement with the Chief Executive and the Registrar General to deliver HM Passport Office services. To do this, they will often handle your personal data on our behalf and under our instructions. These organisations, as “data processors” conduct the following work:

- **Steria:** Opening passport applications received in the post and recording their contents onto our passport application processing system.
- **Computer Sciences Corporation:** Developing and supporting our online application channel, passport application processing system, passport records database and supporting IT systems.
- **The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and FCO Services:** Receive and process British passport applications made overseas on our behalf.
- **De La Rue:** Printing passports where an application has been approved by HM Passport Office.
- **Post Office Ltd:** Providing the Check & Send service which helps customers submit applications to HM Passport Office.
- **Teleperformance:** Answering initial customer enquiries at our contact centre for the Passport Advice line in the UK.
- **HSG:** Answering initial customer enquiries at our contact centre for the Passport Adviceline overseas.
- **DX:** Delivering passports and returning supporting documents in the UK.
- **DHL:** Delivering passports and returning supporting document to customers outside of the UK.
- **ICM and Dub:** Conducting customer satisfaction and public opinion research.
- **Credit reference agencies:** Assisting with statistical analysis.
- **Local Registration Service:** In delivering local registration services.

- **ATOS:** Host and maintain the computer systems used for the registration of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships and for online certificate ordering.
- **Office of National Statistics:** Statistical information for demographic purposes.

All these organisations are required to comply with the Data Protection Act and we apply the same expectations of them as we do our own staff. Through our contracts and agreements with these organisations, we have placed a requirement on them to ensure that your personal information is protected.

In addition, your personal information may be shared with third parties in certain circumstances. More details about this are available below under the “Where my personal information is held and for how long?” heading.

What personal information is held on my passport?

Your passport will contain the following personal information:

Passport number

Surname

First name(s)

Date of birth

Place of birth

Gender

Validity

Digitised image (photograph)

Signature.

Your personal information, digitised image and signature are all located on the personal details page of the passport. The page is in two parts. The upper part is for visual inspection, while the lower part consists of two lines of print which can be read by special passport-reading equipment at immigration controls – it contains no additional information compared to what is listed on the page already. It simply repeats this information in way that can be easily read by such equipment.

In 2006, HM Passport Office introduced the e-passports, which include a chip. The chip stores your digitised image and the personal information printed on the personal details page of your passport and so there is no personal information held on the chip that you cannot see already.

Once information has been placed on the chip, it cannot be amended. When the chip is being read by passport reading equipment, the information on the chip is protected against third parties reading the information from a distance (known as “eavesdropping” or “skimming”) by an advanced digital encryption technique.

What information is shown on a birth, death or marriage/ civil partnership certificate and adoption?

The format of birth, marriage and death certificates has varied over the years and the content may differ depending on when the event was registered, but generally speaking will include the following information:

Birth:

Registration district and sub district of birth

Entry number, date and place of birth

Name and surname

Gender

Name, surname and occupation of father (if recorded)

Name, surname and occupation of mother

Usual address

Name, surname and usual address of the informant (if not the mother or father)

Date of registration

Name of registrar

Death:

Registration district and sub district of death

Entry number

Gender, date and place of death

Name, surname, maiden name (if applicable)

Occupation and usual address of the deceased

Date and place of birth of the deceased

Name, surname and usual address of the informant

Cause of death

Date of registration

Name of the registrar

Marriage:

District of marriage

Place of marriage

Entry number

Date of marriage

Name and surname of parties to the marriage

Age, condition, rank or profession

Residence at the time of the marriage

Name, surname and rank or profession of each party's father

Signatures of both parties and their witnesses

Name of the person(s) who conducted, and registered the marriage

Adoption:

Entry number

Date of birth

Registration district and sub district of birth, or place and country of birth (if born abroad)

Name and surname

Gender

Name and surname, address and occupation of the parent(s) of the adopted child

Date of adoption order or date on which the adoption was effected

Description of court by whom effected

Date of entry

Signature of officer deputed by Registrar General to attest the entry

Civil Partnership:

Registration Authority where the civil partnership was registered

Date and place of civil partnership registration

Name and surname of civil partners

Date of birth, gender, condition and occupation of the civil partners

Residence at the time of the civil partnership registration

Father's name, surname and occupation of each civil partner

Mother's name, surname and occupation of each civil partner

Signatures of civil partners

Name and surname of witnesses

Signature of civil partnership registrar

Where is my personal data held and for how long?

The databases hosting passport and civil registration records are located in the UK and are subject to security oversight and review in accordance with agreed Government standards. A record held in other formats such as paper or microfiche are similarly subject to oversight and review.

Where you have applied for a passport overseas, records of your application are held securely overseas at consular posts by our partner the FCO. In some circumstances, our market research partners may store information securely overseas when they are collecting information from participants. We will tell participants when this is the case at the point of collection.

Where you have applied for a passport or a certificate, the information gathered will be destroyed at different times based on the information in question and how long it is necessary to keep it. For example:

- Personal information obtained from other organisations in order to verify information on a passport application or to support an interview will be deleted 28 days after a passport has been issued. Such information may be retained for longer where the application was refused or it is required for the purpose of the prevention or detection of crime.

- Information about passport deliveries are ordinarily retained for three months for UK deliveries and six months for overseas deliveries in order to address any subsequent queries from customers and to retain evidence of delivery or attempted delivery. Such information may be retained for longer where it is required for the purpose of the prevention or detection of crime.
- We keep records of civil registration events indefinitely as a record to which the public has access. In addition, records of what passports have been issued and the key information included on such passports are kept indefinitely.

We are keeping our retention periods under review and will update this section should we make changes.

Exercising your right to know what personal information we hold about you.

You have the right to be told if HM Passport Office holds any personal information about you and if so to be given a copy. The personal information must be provided to you in a clear form. These are sometimes known as “subject access” rights.

Making a request

If you would like to apply for a copy of your personal information, you should:

- Make a request in writing using the details below
- Enclose a payment of £10
- Provide us with information to help find your records. At a minimum, this should include:
 - Your name
 - Your date of birth
 - Your address
 - Any previous name you were known by
 - If applicable, your UK passport number, (if you have lost your passport, please try to provide us with an approximate date and place of issue).
- Provide us with a means of verifying your identity. The best way of doing this is to provide a copy of the personal details page of your passport. If you do not have a passport, we will accept a photocopy of your photo card driving licence or another form of official photo ID.

Where your request applies solely to information about you contained as part of a civil registration record, such as your birth registration, you should make an application for a copy of the certificate by applying online through the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/order-copy-birth-death-marriage-certificate>

Or by contacting your local Registration office at your local authority.

We have developed a subject access request form for you to use. You do not have to use it in order to make a subject access request. However, it is a useful guide to help you provide all the information we need in order to deal with your application as quickly and smoothly as possible. Download the [Subject access request form](#) here.

We will be happy to help you complete the request. The Citizens Advice Bureau may also be able to help.

Exemptions to the right to subject access

There may be some cases where we do not provide you with all the information we hold about you. This occurs when some specific exemptions within the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 are used or in order to comply with civil registration law. For example, we are allowed to refuse requests where providing personal information would be likely to:

- Prejudice the prevention or detection of crime
- Disclose personal information about another person
- Disclose adoption records for those not yet 18 years old
- Disclose information which relates to a person who has made an application under the Gender Recognition Act.

When we use an exemption set out in legislation, we will let you know about this in our response to your request. Consideration will be carried out in accordance with the Guides to Information provided by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Information about passports issued abroad

Following the transfer for responsibility for the issue of British passports overseas from the FCO to the Identity and Passport Service in April 2011, requests relating to British passports issued overseas should be made directly to HM Passport Office using the contact details above.

Applications will continue to be processed at Regional Passport Processing Centres located around the world by FCO staff on behalf of HM Passport Office. If you reside overseas and need to apply for a British passport, you should refer to the website of your local embassy or high commission for further information.

Contact details for making a subject access request

Disclosure of Information Section
Her Majesty's Passport Office
Aragon Court
Northminster Road
Peterborough PE1 1QG

Tel: 01733 888242

Email: DPA.Queries@hmpo.gsi.gov.uk

Exercising other important rights about your personal information

The Data Protection Act also gives you other rights about how your personal information is handled. An individual has the right to:

- Ensure that the personal data held by HM Passport Office about them is accurate
- Be assured that their data is never, or is no longer used for the purpose of direct marketing
- Have processing of their data prevented or ceased if it is conducted in a manner which is likely to cause them damage or distress
- Object and state if they do not wish to have a decision which would have a significant affect on them taken by automatic means.

If you would like to contact HM Passport Office about how these rights apply to passport or civil registration records, please contact us at:

Her Majesty's Passport Office
Parliamentary and Correspondence Management Team
Chief Executive's Office
4th Floor, Peel Building, SE
Mail point D
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Email: HQenquiries@hmpo.gsi.gov.uk

Other sources of advice and assistance

Further information and advice can be obtained from the Information Commissioner and the Citizens Advice Bureau, whose contact details are as follows:

The Office of the Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Website: www.ico.gov.uk

Citizen Advice Bureau:

To find your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau, go to the "Get advice" pages of the [Citizens Advice website](#)