

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

NEW PASSPORT-ISSUING ARRANGEMENTS FOR BRITISH NATIONALS IN ECUADOR

Q: What is Rationalisation?

The name given to the process of streamlining the FCO's passport operation to make it more efficient, cost effective and sustainable, in preparation for handing over responsibility for full passport services to the Identity & Passport Service (IPS) in 2011.

Q: Why will some of our Embassies not be producing full validity passports anymore?

- Consular work is self-funded, which means we have to live within our means. The cost of maintaining a global network cannot exceed our income from consular and passport premium and services.
- At the moment our expenditure is greater and we have been operating at a loss for over five years, culminating in an estimated deficit of nearly £10 million.
- The National Audit Office recommended in 2006 that we concentrate production in fewer locations because the cost of replacing the existing equipment in 90+ posts, to support the National Identity Scheme, was likely to be excessive. Sending blank passports to 90+ posts increases the chances of losing them and opportunities for fraud.
- Following an extensive study, the FCO Board, the Identity & Passports Service (IPS) Management Board and the Home Office Investment Forum agreed to the merger of the domestic and overseas passport operations on condition that the passport deficit was reduced. Rationalisation offers the best opportunity for us to do this; **making a stronger and sustainable “platform”** for the IPS to continue to deliver high quality passport services in the future.
- The Passport Network Rationalisation Project (PNRP) was set up in May 2008 to make this happen.

Q: How many Production Centres will be there?

At the start of the project, we had 84 passport issuing posts overseas. The project aims to reduce the number of posts “printing” passports and processing applications to 20. But, following the repatriation of all printing at the end of 2010, these will become “processing” centres only.

Q: What's the difference between a Production Centre and a Processing Centre?

The aim has always been to centralise the printing of passports in the UK, along with the IPS, by the end of 2010; a new supplier is being procured at the moment to print and re-design the book. PNRP is helping to facilitate this change, gradually, by reducing the number of places where we print books. The 20 remaining large passport operations will become "centres of excellence" for processing applications, training, and fraud prevention

Q: What work will the Consular teams continue to do for British citizens living and travelling overseas?

All consular posts will continue to provide the full range of assistance in normal times and in crisis situations. This includes being able to issue emergency travel documents to customers who need to travel quickly. If anything, the changes in passport services should free up more time to allow teams to meet the increasing demand for consular assistance from British residents and visitors who need our help.

Q: Does the new system mean the customer has to pay more to get their passport from a regional Production Centre?

The cost of the passport will remain the same but there may be a rise in courier fees. This will vary from post to post.

Q: What will the process be?

In **Ecuador**, customers will submit their applications direct to the nearest **Production Centre**. Washington has been assigned to process and print full validity passports. Once the passport is ready, the Production Centre will return the passport direct to the customer.

Q: Does this mean that customers will have to wait longer for new passports?

- New Production Centres are managing to issue passports in line with our Consular Business Target (CBT) commitment to customers to deliver 90% of passports within ten working days.
- Using local courier services may add to the turn around time, but we are confident that, once the new arrangements bed down, we will be able to deliver passports within an acceptable timeframe. Our aim is to provide a secure and efficient service as well as a timely one. We will do our utmost to ensure that these changes are introduced quickly and seamlessly.
- It is worth remembering that the UK is alone among major partners in continuing to print passports overseas. Most other countries have already

centralised production at a domestic location. Customers typically wait 4 – 6 weeks for a new passport.

Q: Who will monitor this and ensure things run smoothly:

The change in operations will be carefully monitored by staff at post, the Production Centres and London. Consular Regional Directors will also play a critical role in monitoring service delivery, customer feedback and trends in each region.

Q: How will you protect my personal documents and my passport?

By using only the most reliable local and/or internationally recognised courier services; ones which offer an effective tracking service and the ability to provide regular updates on the progress of an application.

Q: Have you transferred passport production elsewhere in the world?

Yes, this is what has happened so far:

- Luxembourg to Paris (late 06)
- Jeddah to Riyadh (November 07)
- Karachi to Islamabad (December 07)
- Ankara to Istanbul (January 08)
- Lisbon to Madrid (January 08)
- Brussels to Paris (April 08)
- Amsterdam to Paris (November 08)
- Washington became Production Centre for North America
- Ottawa to Washington (November 08)
- Vienna to Dusseldorf (November 08)
- Geneva to Paris (January 09)
- 9 spokes to Vienna move to Dusseldorf (March 09)
- Rome and Valletta to Paris Production Centre (June 09)

Where next?

- Pretoria to become the Production Centre for Southern Africa starting with Zimbabwe to Pretoria (April 09)
- Caribbean to Washington Production Centre (July 09)
- Canberra to Wellington (July 09)
- South America to Washington Production Centre (Sept/Oct 09)
- Central America to Washington Production Centre (Sept/Oct 09)
- Nordics and Baltics to Dusseldorf Production Centre (by October 09)

Q: What do we tell our customers in the meantime?

- Look after your passport.
- **Check its validity.** (Passports can be renewed up to 9 months before they expire. The extra time will be added on to the new passport's validity.)
- If you do not have a full validity passport, you will **need to allow extra time to obtain one.**
- **If you are a frequent traveller,** to countries requiring a visa, please enquire at the counter about purchasing a **second passport.***
- These changes might be unwelcome, but they are being introduced to make our operation more secure and sustainable in the longer term.
- The alternative is a vastly reduced service – emergency travel documents only – unless we establish a network that both customers (it's their fee that pays for the service) and we can afford to keep going.
- Integration with the IPS will offer us even more security, sustainability and stability. But they will only take on a viable business.
- We have customers' interests at heart. We want our passports to be secure and fairly priced as well.

* These are issued at the discretion of the Embassy and Consulates. Applications must demonstrate that: a) they are entitled to a British passport and b) there is a genuine need to hold a second passport.