

News story: Home Office proposes changes to passport application fees

The Home Office has outlined plans to introduce different passport fees for online and postal applications as part of its push to increase the use of online services and its ambition to create a self-sustainable immigration and borders system.

The proposals, which remain subject to Parliamentary approval, would mean the money collected through fees will contribute to the cost of processing British passport holders as they travel in and out of the country, shifting the burden for paying for these services away from the taxpayer – millions of whom do not currently hold passports. These reforms are part of plans by the Home Office to invest £100 million on border security and infrastructure next year.

This forms part of the ongoing work to modernise and further strengthen the security of the border. British passport holders already receive a world-class customer experience at the UK Border with 76% of eligible passengers now using ePassport gates which had a record 46.2 million passenger crossings in 2017. And in total 250 million people travel across the UK Border each year and this number is increasing, helping to grow our economy.

In addition, as is currently the case, the fee will pay for the costs associated with issuing UK passports and for consular support provided to British nationals abroad.

As well as ensuring that the process of getting a passport is funded by those who use them, the proposals reflect the differing amounts it costs to process online and postal applications. Her Majesty's Passport Office is continually developing its online application services, with everyone over the age of 16 now able to renew their passport using the latest online system where applicants can upload their passport photograph digitally.

Under the plans, online applications, which are available to all UK-based applicants, will increase in line with inflation, taking the total from £72.50 to £75.50 for adults and £49 for children. Postal applications will increase by £12.50 to £85 for adults and £58.50 for children, reflecting the increased costs of processing postal applications compared to online applications. Adults choosing to apply online would still be paying less than they would have in 2009, with passport fees having decreased in 2012.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

The passport is an invaluable document that allows millions of British people to travel around the world for business and pleasure.

Our priority is to ensure that UK travellers have a secure,

effective, and efficient service from the point of application to the time they pass through the UK border and it is only right that we should look at this whole process when setting our fees.

These proposals will ensure that those people who don't travel abroad are not footing the bill for those who do.

The changes are fully supported by the fee-setting powers that were brought in by the Immigration Act 2016 and if they are approved by Parliament, they will come into force on 27 March 2018.

The proposals are unrelated to the announcement that the colour of the UK passport will be changing in 2019, which will be delivered at no additional cost.