

**An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála**

Oifig na bPasanna, Teach Knockmaun, 42-47 Sráid an Mhóta Íochtarach,  
Baile Átha Cliath 2 D02 TN83

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**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Passport Office, Knockmaun House, 42-47 Mount Street Lower, Dublin 2 D02 TN83

Our Ref: FOI/Req/2019/322

Mr. Stephen McDermott,  
The Journal.

2 December, 2019

Dear Mr. McDermott,

I refer to the request which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

**the release of complaints about the Passport Service between 1 January 2019 and the present date.**

As you made your request on 5 November "the present date" in your request is deemed to be 5 November 2019.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 14 November 2019.

As agreed with you I am releasing a representative sample of 20 complaints received by the Passport Office. The record is listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to part-grant the record. The record being released to you has only been edited to remove personal details of individuals in order to protect their identities.

There were 132 complaints received between 1 January 2019 and 5 November 2019. The total number of passport applications received from 1 January 2019 to 4 November, 2019 was almost 870,000. This is a complaint rate of approximately 0.015%.

In 2019, the Passport Service has focussed on improving the customer experience for Irish citizens through a dedicated customer care hub handling up to 10,000 queries per week. The Passport Service won 'Team of the Year' and 'Impact in Digital' at the 2019 CX awards which recognise

achievements in measuring and managing Customer Experience excellence that delivers better outcomes for customers.

The Passport Service is working on further reducing the number of complaints received and on ensuring that all complaints are resolved quickly.

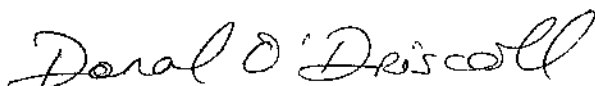
The complaints relate to third party photograph providers, the requirements for documents, turnaround times, re-issuing of secure links for Passport Online and issues relating to the integrity of the Passport Service. Passport Online allows customers to submit their own photo taken at home but we also work with a number of digital photo providers to allow customers to use photo booths and pharmacies. When we received feedback on this, we pass it to the digital photo provider for action. The average turnaround times on the DFA website are estimates. We are continuing to improve on these. Where further documents are required or where it is a complex application processing takes more time. It is best that people not book flights until they have a valid passport. In addition, the Passport Service sends a reminder with all passports that the information should be checked when a new passport is received to ensure that all information is correct. The new Passport Online system generates links for people to complete their witness verification or guardianship consent for a child. In order to ensure that people data is secure, there are a number of security verification questions before the link can be accessed. The link will not work if the security questions are answered incorrectly. The integrity of the passport system is taken very seriously. This is why documents such as birth certificates are required for passport applications. In addition, where someone seeks to change their name on their passport, in most cases, they are required to demonstrate that they have been using the name for two years. In a small number of cases, where a customer has lost a number of passports, the passport may be restricted to a shorter duration.

### **Right of Appeal**

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so in writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to [foi@dfa.ie](mailto:foi@dfa.ie). A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at [foi@dfa.ie](mailto:foi@dfa.ie), or 01-4082857.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks (20 working days) from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely,



Donal O'Driscoll  
Passport Service