



Free passports for British citizens born on or before 2nd September 1929

Standard Note: SN/HA/03201
Last updated: 13 November 2013
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Section: Home Affairs Section

A scheme was introduced in 2004 to provide free passports for British citizens then aged 75 or over “in grateful commemoration for their wartime efforts”. The scheme is aimed at those who were 16 or older at the end of the war.

From time to time calls are made to extend the scheme, so that it would provide for free passports for all persons above a certain age. However, successive governments have rejected this idea. They have argued that introducing an ongoing age-related concession for free passports would be considerably more expensive than the existing scheme, and could require an increase in the passport fee paid by other applicants.

This note briefly discusses the scheme and its take-up. Library Standard Note [SN05684](#) *Passport application fees* outlines the general underlying principles for passport application fees.

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1 Free passports for British citizens born on or before 2 September 1929

On 19 May 2004, the then Government announced that British citizens then aged 75 or over would no longer have to pay for their passports, “in grateful commemoration for their wartime efforts”:

All British passport holders over 75 will be eligible for free ten-year passports in grateful commemoration for their wartime efforts, the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, announced today.

Many veterans have already been given free one year passports and have taken the opportunity to re-visit battlefields for the first time and to re-establish links with former comrades. The allocation of the free ten-year passport for all ensures that veterans will be able to make further visits in future years and means those who helped the war effort at home will also be recognised.¹

The scheme was an extension of a previous concession announced in 2003 which had allowed D-Day veterans and their spouses to apply for a special one-year passport to reduce the costs of those wishing to travel to France to commemorate the anniversary of the Normandy landings.

The scheme was introduced on 18 October 2004. A Home Office press notice of 13 October gave details of how it would work, and added that refunds would be available to those who had paid for passports after the policy had been announced in May.²

The scheme was funded by the Home Office from general funds in its first year. Since then the costs have been recovered from the passport application fees charged to other applicants.³

[Guidance for persons wishing to apply](#) for a concessionary passport under the scheme can be found on the HM Passport Service pages on the Gov.uk website.

2 Calls to extend the scheme to persons born after 2 September 1929

Anyone born after 2 September 1929 still has to pay for a passport when they reach 75.

The scheme applies only to people who were born on or before 2 September 1929. This cut-off date was chosen because those people would have been aged 16 or over when the Second World War ended.

Successive Labour and Coalition Ministers have ruled out extending the scheme to become a purely age-related concession, most recently in November 2013:

David Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether she has any plans to extend eligibility for free UK passports to people over the age of 80 years.

Mr Harper: Concessionary passports are issued free of charge to applicants born on or before 2 September 1929. That date recognises those who were 16 or over at the time the second world war ended. The concession was introduced in 2004 as part of the 60^(th) anniversary commemorative ceremonies and recognises the second world

¹ Home Office press release 187/2004, *Free passports for all World War II Veterans and Civilians*, 19 May 2004

² Home Office press release 313/2004, *Free passports for wartime generation*, 13 October 2004

³ [HHC Deb 1 November 2004 Col 54W](#)

war generation of civilians and military personnel. There are no plans to extend the concession.⁴

Meg Hillier, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Identity, raised some counter-arguments to calls to extend the scheme in an answer to a PQ in February 2010:

This scheme was intended as a recognition of the contribution of second world war veterans rather than being an age related concession and, accordingly, there are no plans to extend it to those who will be over 80 after September 2009. Any extension would be considerably more expensive and would have to be financed by increasing passport fees for other applicants.⁵

3 How many free passports have been issued under the concession?

Figures for the number of free passports and refunds issued in each financial year since the scheme began have been provided in answers to PQs:⁶

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Volume issued</i>
2004-05	121,444
2005-06	157,229
2006-07	127,820
2007-08	109,655
2008-09	82,034
2009-10	71,311
2010-11	62,926
2011-12	46,484

⁴ [HHC Deb 1 November 2013 c633WH](#). See also for example; [HHC Deb 7 March 2006 Col 1316WH](#); [HHC Deb 9 February 2010 c911WH](#); [HHC Deb 7 September 2012 c488W](#)

⁵ [HHC Deb 9 February 2010 c911W](#)

⁶ [HHC Deb 5 May 2009 c36WH](#); [HHC Deb 7 September 2012 c488W](#)