



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála

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

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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

Our Ref: FOI/Req/2018/183

Ms. Rossa McMahon,
PG McMahon Solicitors.

19th July, 2018.

Dear Ms. McMahon,

I refer to your recently submitted request for information, made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, in which you requested the following:

A copy of all records held by the Department about the policy of the Passports Office to obtain a Public Services Card as an item of identity for passport applicants,

and, as agreed with you to limit the scope of the request to this letter explaining the requirement to obtain a Public Services card as an item of identity for certain categories of passport applicants.

I also refer to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 29th June, 2018.

The current position is that, since 29 March 2016, the Passport Service has required all first time passport applicants, aged 18 and above, who are resident in Ireland to hold a valid Public Services card. This requirement also applies to the small number of adult passport applicants, whose passport was issued before 1 January 2005 and has been reported as lost, stolen or damaged and those whose passport expired more than five years ago. If an applicant falls in to one of the above mentioned categories of applicant, then their application must include a copy of their PSC. It was introduced due to the robust assurances provided by the SAFE2 standard in protecting against fraud and identify theft. The SAFE2 process, which includes the Public Services Card, represents the most secure and robust means available to the State for physically or digitally verifying applicants for public services. This measure therefore assists in upholding the integrity of the Irish passport.

The explanation for the requirement for a PSC for those whose passport expired more than five years ago is that the Passport Service issues passports with a maximum validity of ten years on the basis that a person's appearance will naturally change over time, and therefore their

passport photograph can only be considered a true likeness for a limited period, and it is in line with this that additional requirements have been put in place for those whose passport has expired more than five years ago (issued 15 years or more ago with a 15 years or more old photograph of the holder of the expired passport).

The Government agreed on 17 July 2017 to extend the requirement for a PSC to all adults in the State accessing a wide range of public services in Ireland, and this includes citizens applying for passports. The Department is a member of a joint working group, with other relevant Departments, which is examining the business process, technical and resource implications on how this requirement can best be met and the schedule for its adoption.

There are no plans at present to extend PSC requirements for accessing services, including in relation to passport applications, to Irish citizens not resident in the State.

In the meantime, all passport applications from Irish citizens will continue to be subject to rigorous identity and entitlement checks based on existing documentary requirements.

A key principle behind the concept of the PSC is that the delivery of services is more efficient when a person's identity does not have to be authenticated at every transaction. With specific reference to the issuance of passports, the introduction of the PSC requirement has allowed the Passport Service to dispense with requirements for certain additional documentation and reduces the overall volume of documentation that Irish citizens must submit when applying for a passport. The PSC requirement is now a key resource in the Passport Service's efforts to combat fraud and identity theft and uphold the integrity of the Irish passport.

With reference to the legal basis for the Minister to request a copy of an applicant's PSC, the Passports Act 2008 (as amended) provides for the issue by the Minister of passports to Irish citizens. Section 7(1) (b) of the Passports Act 2008 requires that the Minister be satisfied as to an individual's identity before issuing a passport to that person. Section 7(2) provides as follows: "The Minister may require an applicant for a passport to provide such information as the Minister may require for the purposes of the application and to produce to him or her such documents as he or she considers necessary or expedient to enable him or her to perform the functions of the Minister under this Part." It is on this basis that the Minister requires applicants to produce identity documentation.

I trust this clarifies the position regarding the Public Services card requirement for passport applicants.

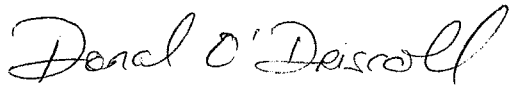
Right of Appeal

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. 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 or 01-4082857.

If you wish to, 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 staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donal O'Driscoll". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Donal O'Driscoll,
Corporate Support,
Passport Services,
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.