



UK Visas & Immigration

Sumsi Timonda
Email: request-593631-
9426c77b@whatdotheyknow.com

Freedom of Information
Central Correspondence Team
Central Operations
PO Box 3468
Sheffield
S3 8WA

Email:
FOIRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/ukvi

FOI Reference: 54785

22 August 2019

Dear Sir or Madam

Thank you for your enquiry of 30 July in which you requested information on document retention and the online visa application system. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Information Requested

The UKVI's new online visa application system allows clients to self-upload supporting documents.

Please let us know the retention standards for the copies/scans of documents submitted--including birth certificates, passports, bank statements and property documents--for settlement and non-settlement visa applications. Please also let us know whether these documents are stored centrally or if each "visa application hub" has its separate storage. Does anybody outside the Home Office--including third party visa application centers--have access to these documents?

Response

Digitised documents stored on our commercial partner's systems are stored for 60 days for non-settlement applications and 120 days for settlement applications. Any documents saved securely to individual application records on Home Office local servers at Decision Making Centres (DMCs) will be retained for one month and those replicated on a web-based server will be retained for up to 10 years.

Digitised documents are stored centrally in two secure platforms, operated by our two commercial partners handling overseas applications. Documents relevant to an entry clearance decision may be saved securely to individual application records on Home Office local servers at DMCs and replicated on a Home Office central web-based server.

Where a customer takes their documents to a Visa Application Centre (VAC) for scanning, VAC staff will be able to see the documents while they are being scanned, but the originals are then returned to the customer and VAC staff have no access to the digitised documents. Customers can also self-scan documents in which case they will not be seen by VAC staff. Aside from authorised system administrators only Home Office entry clearance staff have access to the digitised documents held on the commercial partners' systems. Documents held on DMC servers are accessible only by Home Office entry clearance staff and authorised system administrators. Documents held on the central web-based server are accessible by authorised system administrators, Home Office entry clearance staff, other Home Office departments and partners across Government. These partners are subject to an agreed Memoranda of Understanding in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk, quoting reference 54785. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by staff not involved in providing you with this response. If you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Yours faithfully

J Slater
Central Operations

We value your feedback, please use the link below to access a brief anonymous survey to help us improve our service to you:
<http://www.homeofficesurveys.homeoffice.gov.uk/s/108105TAZNG>