



Home Office

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# E-passport gates: standard operating procedures

Version 4.0

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## About this guidance

This guidance tells Border Force officers about the roles and responsibilities applicable to operating the e-passport gates.

**All the content of this guidance is classified as official – sensitive and must not be disclosed outside of the Home Office.**

The purpose of this document is to provide comprehensive guidance on the roles and responsibilities applicable to operating the e-passport gates, and actions to take in case of exceptions. For the purposes of this guidance the term 'gates' will be used to mean e-passport gates.

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The standard operating procedures are vital to ensuring effective and confident operation and monitoring of gates.

## Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors, then email [Border Force National Immigration and Customs Enquiries \(BF NICE\)](#). The inbox is no longer operational for enquiries but will auto-respond with the latest advice on finding support.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can [email the Guidance Rules and Forms team](#).

## Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **4.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **19 August 2019**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

Additions have been made to reflect the expansion of ePassport gate eligibility to seven additional nationalities on Monday 20 May 2019.

## Related content

[Contents](#)

# Functionality

This page tells Border Force officers about the functionality of the gates.

The gates system is a tool to help Border Force maintain effective control over increasing numbers of travellers. Adult nationals of European Economic Area (EEA) member states are the main group of passengers eligible to use gates. These passengers do not require leave to enter and make up the vast majority of UK arrivals. In addition, adult visitors and entry clearance holders from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States of America (B5JSSK) can use the gates to enter the UK.

The other 2 groups eligible to use the gates are children aged 12 to 17, accompanied by an adult, from the UK, EEA, Switzerland or a B5JSSK country as well as a small cohort of [registered travellers](#).

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## Overview of functionality

### Single gate models

Passengers must hold the bio data page of their passport face down on the gate scanner. This will capture machine readable zone (MRZ) information and carry out Redacted \*\*\*\*\* and extracting the holder's image and details.

Document checks are also undertaken **iRedacted \*\*\*\*\*** If the images match, the gate will open, and the passenger may proceed.

### Eligibility criteria

British, European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss nationals aged 18 years or over and holding a valid, genuine e-passport are eligible to use the gates. In addition, UK, EEA and Swiss national children aged 12 to 17 will be able to use the gates at all sites across the UK if they hold a genuine e-passport and are accompanied by an adult.

Visitors and entry clearance holders from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States of America (B5JSSK) are also able to use the ePassport gates, provided they are 18 years of age or over, or accompanied by an adult if aged 12-17.

The fourth and final group eligible to use e-passport gates are registered travellers. There is a list of [eligible nationalities](#).

There are some groups of B5JSSK national passengers who are coming for specific migration purposes without holding an EC, and therefore must not use the gates. These are:

- Short Term Students studying for up to 6 months
- those seeking entry under the Tier 5 Creative and Sporting Concession (Certificate of Sponsorship holders)
- those coming to carry out Permitted Paid Engagements
- a close family member of an EEA national seeking to join their family member in the UK

Other nationalities, unaccompanied children and holders of other document types are currently unable to use the gates. The gates can process passengers in the height range 4 foot 10 inches to 6 foot 6 inches (145 to 195cm) approximately.

### Mobility impaired or disabled passengers

Passengers unable to use the gates due to a disability will be processed and facilitated through manual controls in the normal way.

#### **Related content**

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# Operating hours and staffing requirements

This page tells Border Force officers about operating hours and staffing requirements for e-passport gates.

## Operating hours

The gates should be staffed and open according to the locally agreed timetable of operation. The gates must not be left inoperative or closed down during these operating hours except with the authority of the duty or floor higher officer. They must record the decision with the reason for it and refer to the senior officer where possible.

Local senior management will establish the operating hours and communicate these to staff. The operating hours should also be incorporated into the service level agreement with the port operator.

## Staffing requirements

The gates must not be opened or allowed to accept passengers without both a monitoring officer and referrals officer present, where local arrangements are that both are required. In locations where there is not a dedicated referrals officer, the process for clearing referred passengers should be reflected in the local operating procedures. The system will not work unless an authorised user is logged into the monitoring terminal.

### Related content

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# Roles and responsibilities

This page tells Border Force officers about their roles and responsibilities for operating the gates.

## Monitoring officer

The monitoring officer is responsible for supervising all stages of operation of the gates from opening through to managing their operation and disabling at the end of the scheduled operating hours. The role of monitoring officer will rotate throughout the day as part of a fixed-point system.

The monitoring officer is not a 'machine minder', the role requires trained officers who can and should override the system or challenge an arriving passenger whenever necessary. You must be vigilant to ensure that inadmissible passengers do not gain admission through the gates by posing as eligible British, European Economic Area (EEA), Swiss, B5JSSK nationals or registered travellers.

You will continue to discharge the same responsibilities as on the manual control. This includes protecting vulnerable people from harm, customs related responsibilities, counter-terrorism vigilance and the duty of care to children under [section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009](#). You should also remain vigilant for signs of human trafficking. Where suspicions arise, you should reject the passenger for the referrals officer to examine them. Passengers accepted by the gate may also be stopped and redirected to the referrals officer. Where the volume of passengers is such that it would be difficult to do so and continue to monitor the gates, then the passenger should be asked to wait and dealt with by the referrals officer as soon as practicable.

There are further details of this role in case of [exceptions](#) (when passengers are rejected by the gates).

You will not be held responsible for gates system errors or failures.

## Start up checks

You should log on to the system **Redacted \*\*\*\*\*** You should check that the equipment is working and that the gates are not obstructed, as well as ensuring that you have manual control over the gates to open and close them as required.

If you are the first monitoring officer to operate the gates on that day, you should inspect the passport reader at each gate. If cleaning is required, you should notify the duty higher officer, who will arrange for the readers to be cleaned using pre-moistened optical wipes provided for that purpose.

If you notice any increase in document read failures, you should consider inspecting the cleanliness of passport readers. If it appears necessary to clean them, you



should notify the duty higher officer, who will arrange for them to be cleaned using the pre-moistened optical wipes provided for that purpose.

It is recommended that you do not operate the gates for more than 30 minutes of continuous, uninterrupted passenger processing. For operational reasons this may be longer but should not exceed one hour.

## Shutting down the gates

At the end of the gates operating session (end of advertised operating hours or a forced end to operation), you should disable the gates in the closed position and log out of the system completely. A red cross should be displayed on the front of each of the gates. You must allow a transaction to conclude in the gate before disabling it and shutting it down.

## Gates incident log

This will be kept on your desk during the hours of operation. Out of hours it will be kept in the watch house. You will be required to record all relevant incidents in the gates incident log as soon as reasonably practicable. These may include:

- any gates malfunction (detailing start and end times)
- system error messages
- unusual or unexpected rejections of passengers
- passenger-related incidents, such as tailgaters and adults carrying children
- complaints about the gates
- a detailed description of the incident, including which managers were present
- the action that was taken at the time and any further required action
- if the incident requires escalation

You should also bring any incident to the attention of the duty higher officer as soon as reasonably practicable.

## Host attendance

Where provided, hosts should be present during scheduled gates operating hours. You should record any lateness or the duration of any absence of hosts in the gates incident log.

## Cleaners

It is expected that cleaning will take place outside of operating hours, but in the event that the gates area is to be cleaned during operating hours, you should disable the gates and manually open the exit doors while they are being cleaned, and re-enable (ensuring the doors are all closed) once cleaning is complete. This is to allow cleaners access to the gates and avoid confusion for the passengers.

## Referrals officer

Passengers rejected by the gates are termed 'referrals.' They must be directed to the referrals officer for manual processing. Directing referrals is the responsibility of the host and referrals officer. The visual display on the gate will also inform referred passengers that they should go to see an officer.

As a referrals officer, you are responsible for manually processing passengers who have been rejected from the gates. You will be required to handle all referrals as a priority, but you also may be required to process passengers from the adjacent queue when not dealing with referrals.

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All referrals should be examined with special care, and officers should bear in mind the reasons for the gates rejection when deciding whether the passenger should be allowed to proceed.

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Officers must be regularly moved from the desk for a break or to undertake different work.

## Duty or floor higher officer

The duty higher officer will identify appropriate people from the duty list to cover the roles of monitoring officer and referrals officer during agreed operating hours.

If a host is absent or late, the duty higher officer is responsible for informing the host's employer.

The duty higher officer is responsible for ensuring that the [disabling procedure](#) is adhered to by staff.

## Designated gates officer or superuser

People carrying out this role will be identified (with a contact number) in the ports' local operating procedures. The role will include:

- ensuring that the gates incident log is maintained
- escalating issues recorded in the gates incident log where appropriate

- informing monitoring officers of any mechanical problems with the gates
- ensuring cleanliness of the gates area and monitoring station

## Hosts

Hosts should direct eligible passengers towards the gates and help passengers use them. Where logistics permit, hosts should promote good order in the queue to the gates.

Hosts must remain vigilant **Redacted \*\*\*\***. They must report any suspicious or dangerous behaviour by passengers to the monitoring officer.

Where wheelchair accessible gates are installed, hosts should ensure that only self-propelled wheelchairs are allowed to approach the gates. This is because the gates contain anti-tailgating devices designed to prevent more than one person from entering at once. Passengers in wheelchairs pushed by another person will not therefore be able to pass through the gates.

In the event of mechanical failure of the gates the host should organise passengers into a queue and direct them to the first available Border Force officer or act as directed by the duty higher officer.

It has been noted from trials to date that some passengers' ineligible to use the gates choose to enter the gates queue in order to avoid a longer wait for the manual control. In these cases, the host has discretion over whether to direct such passengers to the back of the main queue (to discourage such attempts) or to send them to the referrals officer.

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### Related content

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# Passenger processes and exceptions

This page tells Border Force officers about the passenger processes in relation to the e-passport gates.

## Single gate models: failure to pass the 'entry' gate

The gate will **not** open automatically for passengers who are:

- ineligible (based on the [eligibility criteria](#))
- Redacted \*\*\*\*\*
- holders of passports giving rise to a 'document error' message

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## Document check failure message

If the document fails checks Redacted \*\*\*\*\*, a document error message will be displayed. The referrals officer should refer the document to a forgery officer if necessary.

Where passengers are not allowed through the entry gate, the host should direct them to the referrals officer for manual checking. The monitoring officer should inform the referrals officer of which checks the passenger has failed, and should mention any specific concerns they have regarding that passenger.

## Single gates model: failure to pass the 'exit' gate

The exit gate will not open if the system is unable to match the passenger's live capture image against the facial image contained in the passport chip.

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Passengers who fail to pass the gate for the reasons specified in the section titled '[single gates model: failure to pass the entry gate](#)', must either re-join the main immigration queue or submit to the referrals officer for manual immigration checks. For watchlist procedures, the monitoring officer should follow guidance contained within the port local operating procedures. They should inform the referrals officer why the passenger has failed to pass and mention any specific concerns they have regarding that passenger (where possible).

Where passengers fail to pass for the reasons outlined in the section titled '[single gates model: failure to pass the exit gate](#)', the monitoring officer will be required to make the same decision and exercise discretion as explained in this section.

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## Alarms and alerts

An alarm will trigger when any of the following are detected:

- attempts to force a door or doors open
- a door or doors are blocked
- tailgating

In order to resume normal operation, the monitoring officer should acknowledge the alarm. In some cases, it will also be necessary to confirm whether the alarm is genuine or false.

On all gate models, where the monitoring officer detects a passenger attempting any of the above, the relevant gate should be closed to prevent the person passing and the duty or floor higher officer alerted.

Where a passenger manages to force their way through the gates, the monitoring officer should seek assistance from the referrals officer and duty higher officer in order to arrange for examination in the normal way if it is safe to do so. The monitoring officer should also reset the affected gate to allow it to resume normal operation.

## Abandoned objects

If an abandoned object is discovered, the monitoring officer should immediately obtain the assistance of the person or organisation nominated in the local procedures to help determine whether the object is suspicious, and, if necessary, should remotely open the affected gate to enable access to the object. Passenger access to the gates should be closed off, and the local procedures for dealing with abandoned packages followed.

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## System malfunction

This page tells Border Force officers what to do if there is a system malfunction.

In case of malfunction, the monitoring officer should seek assistance **Redacted \*\*\*\*** and assist the operator by performing superuser actions or explaining why this is not possible and completing the required form.

The monitoring officer must assess how severely service is affected by the malfunction and, with assistance **Redacted \*\*\*\*\*** decide whether a limited service can be maintained. This may require authorisation from, or referral to, a person as designated in the local operating procedures. The gates may run with one or more individual gates disabled provided that the system is otherwise operating correctly.

A situation may arise where the number of gates left in operation no longer justifies the allocation of staff to the roles of monitoring officer and referrals officer. If this is the case and there is an urgent need to staff the manual primary control point (PCP), local management have discretion to shut down the gates and transfer the monitoring officer to the manual control. Approval of the relevant senior officer should be sought as soon as practicable, and the decision logged in the gates incident log.

### Related content

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# Disabling and shutting down

This page tells Border Force officers about disabling and shutting down the e-passport gates.

## Shutting down the bank of gates

The gates should only be shut down (powered down) in exceptional technical circumstances, such as for system maintenance.

## Disabling the bank of gates

During agreed operating hours, the gates should be disabled only in circumstances where to continue operating them would either undermine the control or risk other passengers' health and safety. The approval of the relevant senior officer should be sought as soon as practicable, and the decision logged in the gates incident log.

Reasons for disabling the whole bank of gates may include:

- Redacted \*\*\*\*\*
- staff shortage - for example a monitoring officer or referrals officer is called away
- number of gates failing to operate no longer justifies the allocation of staff to the roles of monitoring officer and referrals officer - in this case a shut down may be appropriate
- Redacted\*\*\*\*\*
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The gates should be brought back into operation as soon as the situation is resolved.

## Disabling individual gates

The monitoring officer can temporarily disable specific gates by un-checking the 'enabled' button on the command menu for each gate. Examples where it may be appropriate to do so include:

- individual gate malfunction, where the other gates are still operating correctly
- training, for the purpose of enabling inexperienced users to familiarise themselves with operating the gates

## Disabling procedure

When disabling the gates (except in case of an [emergency](#)), the duty or floor higher officer is responsible for ensuring adherence to the following 3 step procedure:

### Step 1



The monitoring officer closes all gates, logs off (which will automatically disable the gates and display a red cross on the front of each) and shuts down the system. If shutting down during normal operating hours, the monitoring officer must also record in the gates incident log the time the gates were shut, together with the reason why.

## Step 2

Access to the gates area of the arrivals hall is barred and gate passengers directed to the manual primary check point desks.

## Step 3

Passengers already waiting to use the gates are directed to the European Economic Area queue.

## Emergency procedure

The monitoring officer should follow the local evacuation plan for all passengers waiting at the gates- refer to local operating procedures for plan location.

Once passengers have been evacuated, the gates should be disabled in the closed position where possible.

Some ports may have different local arrangements and local operating procedures for the gates should be updated to reflect any such changes.

### **Related content**

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