

Midlothian MP says the Passport Office is a shambles

The UK Government has no idea how many people are receiving their passports on time, because they don't bother to measure it, according to a response to a question from Midlothian MP, Owen Thompson.

Mr Thompson tabled a series of written questions about HM Passport Office telephone services and passport application processes, after receiving dozens of emails from constituents who had not received their passports on time for their holidays and could not get through to the Passport Office's Customer Service team. The telephone service is run by a private company, Teleperformance.

In response to a question on the percentage of passport applications which were processed within the HM Passport Office's own service standard times in each of the last three years, Home Office Minister Kevin Foster did not provide a figure, instead stating "the data was not held in a reportable format". There was also no data on how many got a call back within the specified period when seeking to upgrade their application.

Mr Thompson said: "Under this government's shambolic leadership, public services are being run into the ground and the passport office is no exception – it is in utter chaos.

It is beyond belief that the government does not know whether the Passport Office is meeting its own targets, because if this answer is to be believed, it doesn't even bother to gather the facts.

"Questions still need answered over how much this underperforming, privately run helpline is costing the public, just to leave them hanging on the line. The fact the data is not provided shows how little this government cares about improving public services. They would rather the public did not know about how bad things have become under their watch.

"Midlothian constituents tell me they have been left absolutely distraught as the deadlines for getting their new passport are missed and they can't get through on the customer service line to find out what's going on. People report waiting for hours then being cut off or fobbed off.

"This is an appalling standard of service which cannot be brushed off and blamed on the pressure of Covid – it is bad planning and bad management from a dysfunctional government. The fact they are seeking to slash civil service numbers in the eye of the storm is even more ridiculous.

"The chaos at the Passport Office is yet another symptom of a government in utter disarray. Rather than measure performance and strive to improve, they prefer to deny reality. It is not good enough. It has been frustrating as an MP trying to help too, with the usual channels to represent constituents also at breaking point. But it should not be necessary for MPs to intervene for people to receive an efficient service.

"This system needs a complete shake up from the very top. Fixing the problems has to start by Ministers giving straight answers to straight questions and measuring the extent of the problems faced."



Owen Thompson MP