



**THE UK BORDER AGENCY RESPONSE TO
THE INDEPENDENT CHIEF INSPECTOR'S REPORT
ON BORDER CONTROL AT
MANCHESTER AIRPORT**

THE UK BORDER AGENCY RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INDEPENDENT CHIEF INSPECTOR'S REPORT ON BORDER CONTROL AT MANCHESTER AIRPORT

The UK Border Agency thanks the Independent Chief Inspector for this report, and we value the opportunity the report presents for us to consider our border control activities and how we might improve them.

We are pleased the report notes the significant changes we have made to border control in bringing together customs and immigration work. This major change has allowed the UK Border Agency to create a more flexible workforce that is better able to deal with significant risks to the UK Border. As the report acknowledges, a single agency approach has also allowed a strong, mutually beneficial working relationship with Manchester Airport Group and other key partners.

The report makes six recommendations to improve our border activities. The Agency welcomes the recommendations to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations at Manchester Airport. Our organisation has continued to change and improve since the time of the inspection and we have already addressed many of the concerns raised in those recommendations. Of course, more needs to be done; border controls are under continual and ever changing threats that require a flexible and changing response.

The recommendations are that the UK Border Agency:

1. Reviews the rationale for 'indicative' targets, assessing how they assist in driving performance improvement.

1.1 The UK Border Agency accepts this recommendation in part.

1.2 The Chief Inspector makes the argument in his report that the indicative targets for Manchester Airport were neither specific targets to drive performance, nor were staff held accountable for meeting these targets, and describes them as nominal targets. The report acknowledges the difficulty in predicting what types of goods could illegally enter the UK over a financial year because of changing trends in smuggling routes, production centres and new approaches to smuggling.

1.3 In reality, the UK Border Agency can, working with partner agencies such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, make an assessment of the goods that enter the UK illegally each year. This takes place to assess for example, the amount of heroin targeted at the UK or the size of the illicit cigarette market. These assessments lead, at least in part, to the national UK Border Agency commodity targets. It is much more difficult to assess how much of each illicit commodity might enter through each local port, and this is why targets for Manchester Airport were described as indicative. At a local level, the national targets instead set the priorities for each port – and for Manchester Airport the clear commodity priority is Class A drugs. It is these priorities, not indicative targets, that drive performance at a local level. The indicative targets, based on risk and intelligence assessments, allow senior managers to understand the relative risks of ports, assess relative performance and to better allocate resource to risk.

1.4 However, we acknowledge the need to continually review our approach to performance measurement and improvement. The UK Border Agency is currently engaged in reviewing the

rationale behind Border Force targets, including how productivity performance in tackling smuggling risks might be best assessed.

2. Introduces performance targets to increase the use of facial recognition gates and ensures the length of time to repair faults is reduced.

2.1 The UK Border Agency accepts this recommendation.

2.2 The UK Border Agency at Manchester Airport is trialling the use of ePassport gates in Terminals 1 and 2. These offer an automated alternative to the manual control. The gates, like the manual control, are linked to security and watchlist checking, and require the presence of Border Force Officers to monitor the system, as well as a designated 'host' to assist travellers to use the gates. The inspection report recommends performance targets be introduced to increase the use of ePassport gates, and for improvements to be made to the time taken to repair faults.

2.3 Performance targets have already been introduced to increase the use of the gates. The target for May was 10% of eligible gate passengers: Manchester Airport Terminal 1 achieved 31% and Manchester Terminal 2 achieved 20%.

2.4 The UK Border Agency is currently working with suppliers to agree an improvement to the current 4 day Service Level Agreement (SLA). We continue to have weekly meetings with all relevant service providers, and regularly monitor each set of gates through a weekly fault return which covers both technical and operational issues. This is also supported by a dedicated Helpdesk which ensures progress and resolution of faults is properly relayed to ports. We have also agreed with Manchester Airport Group we will monitor and improve gate availability. Together with a number of technical improvements and upgrades to the gates, these measures have enhanced and improved the reliability and performance of the ePassport gates at all sites, including Manchester Airport.

3. Deploys resources effectively and investigates the current reliance on overtime.

3.1 The UK Border Agency accepts this recommendation.

3.2 Manchester Airport has a strong seasonal variation in passenger numbers. This means the UK Border Agency requires additional resources to tackle pressure on immigration controls in the summer months. The inflexibility of legacy systems meant a high reliance on overtime was needed to ensure these resources were available in the summer months.

3.3 Through combining Immigration and Customs staff, introducing team working and annual hours working, the UK Border Agency is developing a more flexible workforce that is no longer reliant on overtime payments to tackle changes in operational activity. Current Manchester Airport attendance patterns have no overtime element, and planned attendances for 2011 look to take overtime out of the system.

4. Ensures detection staff are aware of the operational guidance on stop and search and are able to articulate and, if necessary, record the reasons for stopping and searching passengers.

4.1 The UK Border Agency accepts this recommendation in part.

4.2 The UK Border Agency considers it vital that officers use their powers of stop and search effectively, appropriately and proportionately. In order to do so, officers must follow passenger

selection guidance when carrying out the visual profiling and selection of passengers in the air passenger environment.

4.3 UK Border Agency managers at Manchester Airport carry out assurance checks, through observations and reviewing notebooks, in order to be satisfied officers follow the selection guidance and discussions of the guidance are a consistent and regular feature of team meetings. In addition, many officers carry personal aide memoirs of the guidance. The UK Border Agency does not consider staff are unaware of the guidance, or that they fail to use the guidance when selecting passengers for examination.

4.4 In explaining to the inspection team their reasons for selecting passengers with phrases like “gut instinct”, UK Border Agency officers fell short of properly articulating the guidance and selection criteria. It could be that the officers misunderstood the reasons for the inspection team’s questions.

4.5 However, whilst challenging the suggestion officers are unaware of the selection guidance, UK Border Agency acknowledges the need to improve the way their officers articulate the use of this guidance. All staff will be reminded of the need to respond thoroughly when explaining their reasons for selecting passengers for examination.

5. Puts in place a contingency plan to deal with the risk to the border presented by the lack of border security in two areas of the Common Departure Lounge.

5.1 The UK Border Agency accepts this recommendation and has implemented it.

5.2 Terminal 3 operates as both a domestic and an international terminal. At the time of the inspection there was a potential risk international passengers transferring between terminals to Terminal 3 could walk out of the airport without passing any primary controls. Although the numbers of passengers who could do so were very small, the UK Border Agency accepts this risk needed to be properly addressed.

5.3 Since the time of the inspection, this risk has been removed by instructing Manchester Airport Group to no longer allow international transfer passengers’ unescorted movement to Terminal 3.

6. Records all risks on the local risk register and manages them through to an acceptable level.

6.1 The UK Border Agency accepts this recommendation.

6.2 The Chief Inspector identified the risk covered by recommendation five had been escalated to the regional risk register, but in the process had been removed from the local port risk register and not dealt with. The UK Border Agency accepts the need to ensure all risks whether short, medium or long term, should be entered on the port risk register to ensure they are managed effectively and remain on that register until they are resolved.