

**THE UK BORDER AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE INDEPENDENT CHIEF  
INSPECTOR'S REPORT:**

**AN INSPECTION OF THE HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT LOCAL  
IMMIGRATION TEAM**

**SEPTEMBER 2011 – JANUARY 2012**

The UK Border Agency thanks the Independent Chief Inspector for recognising the commitment of the UK Border Agency's staff working in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Immigration Team and their effectiveness in managing asylum casework and identifying and removing immigration offenders from the UK. In his report, An Inspection of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Immigration Team, the Independent Chief Inspector highlights areas of good practice whilst also identifying where the UK Border Agency can go further to make progress. The UK Border Agency particularly welcomes the recognition of the following areas of work in the Local Immigration Team:

- Clear recognition of the effective management of the Local Immigration Team including the way in which work is tasked, resource allocated and the results analysed through very effective Tasking and Co-ordination Group meetings.
- Acknowledgement that this effective management contributes to the LIT exceeding its removals targets including its target to remove individuals who were most likely to cause harm.
- Good performance on asylum decisions which were generally made within the 30 day target and well above the national average.
- Acknowledgement of the Arrest Team's effective operational planning, its professionalism and conduct as well as its engagement with individuals encountered during these operations who were treated with dignity and respect.
- Recognition of the positive relationships with local stakeholders and partners including MPs and police.
- Praise of staff awareness of their responsibilities relating to children.

We recognise that we need to continually improve our processes and performance. The Agency is embarking upon a transformation programme to become a highly competent, continuously improving organisation which controls migration for the benefit of the UK, making correct decisions on who may visit or stay, and deterring, stopping or removing those who have no right to be here, in a way that affords value for money for the taxpayer. We are therefore grateful to the Independent Chief Inspector for his considered recommendations, and our response to each is set out below.

**1. Implements a plan to effectively manage all cases within the Migration Refusal Pool, ensuring that in all appropriate cases, individuals:**

- **are served with appropriate notification informing them of the requirement to leave the UK; and**
- **who have no right to remain in the UK are removed.**

**1.1. THE UK BORDER AGENCY ACCEPTS THIS RECOMMENDATION.**

1.2 We are committed to ensuring that those who have no right to remain in the UK return home. In the recent past the Agency has had to focus its removals capability to deal with specific issues, such as foreign national offenders and high asylum intake. Moving forward the Agency continues to develop an enforcement strategy aimed at addressing all those without lawful permission to remain in the UK. This includes illegal migrants, overstayers, failed asylum seekers and foreign national offenders.

1.3 We know we can do better in this area which is why we will:

- Use our enhanced ability to monitor departures from the UK to develop better management information on those who are still in the country;
- Build better performance management of our enforcement teams;
- Build organisational processes to deliver increased returns;
- Deliver commercial solutions for increasing volume returns; and
- Develop the hostile environment in-country and ensure a clear compliance message is communicated to the illegal migrant population that if they do not leave voluntarily, it will become increasingly difficult to access any services in the UK and will ultimately result in enforced removal with a ban on return.

1.4 Our overall aim is to make it as straightforward as possible for migrants to be compliant, while penalising those who break our rules. The Migration Refusal Pool is not a backlog of cases awaiting a decision but is a report that has been developed to allow us to monitor those that have been refused leave, had leave curtailed, withdrawn an application or had an application rejected in a Migration category (student, work permit etc). Many of these migrants will leave the UK voluntarily or go onto regularise their stay after providing the Agency with further information. Where this happens the individual will be removed from the Migration Refusal Pool. Historically, internal management information has shown that approximately 60% of the pool's cases have been concluded after one year, of which 14% have left the UK.

1.5 The Agency is currently undertaking a tender for a four-year contract to provide contact management and casework services. The successful contractor will contact refused migration applicants, establishing their current circumstances where possible, and for appropriate cases, inform them of the

requirement to leave the UK. Where individuals with no leave do not leave the UK voluntarily, the team will deal with specific barriers to removal such as obtaining travel documentation and will pass cases to Local Immigration Teams to enforce removal. This will build on the work already begun by teams across the country.

1.6 We expect the contractor to be in place by September 2012. Until that point, regions will continue to progress their cases, and enforce the removal of overstayers from the Migration Refusal Pool.

1.7 The UKBA's summer campaign on enforcement is already intensifying the focus of activity on a variety of overstayers – principally those recently refused extensions of leave in the UK and students whose leave has recently been curtailed. So far this campaign has seen us remove over 1800 overstayers.

## **2. Takes action to improve its performance in relation to absconder recovery action, ensuring that people who have no right to remain are located and removed from the UK.**

2.1 THE UK BORDER AGENCY ACCEPTS THIS RECOMMENDATION.

2.2 The Agency has now formalised a new absconder strategy, comprising three key strands:

**Prevent.** The introduction of a contact management system which will allow for earlier intervention of non compliant behaviour; including more effective use of intelligence to enhance our understanding of absconder behaviour which will help us to better manage risk.

**Trace.** A new and more sophisticated absconder tracing capability which will ensure early identification and a faster tasking process of activity.

**Enforce.** Doing more to quickly remove those we trace; streamlining our processes to bring activity around securing travel documents much earlier in the process as well as using prosecution as a lever for compliance.

2.3 The Agency has already made progress:

- we have published an updated Absconder Threat Assessment;
- we have cleansed absconder records to verify the accuracy of data held;
- we have reviewed and simplified guidance for staff to set out a robust step by step process which will be discussed by regional single point of contacts at a workshop in early July;

- we have established a small National Absconder Tracing Team within the Control and Command Unit in Manchester, which will grow by the summer to incorporate the Criminal Casework Directorate Trace and Locate Team to create a centre of excellence, supported by additional staff once budgetary approval is secured;
- we will be checking details of 29,000 absconders against Equifax Credit Reference Agency records imminently to support the development of intelligence packages for enforcement action.
- we will be developing a performance management framework to support delivery.

**3. Demonstrates, through appropriate performance measures, how effective intelligence has been in identifying whether the information provided was productive in preventing and detecting immigration and customs offences.**

**3.1 THE UK BORDER AGENCY ACCEPTS THIS RECOMMENDATION.**

3.2 The Agency has accepted the need to demonstrate the value of intelligence as an end to end process and is currently building this capability as part of its intelligence modernisation programme.

3.3 This includes the creation of a central allegation database which will provide the ability to track an individual allegation to outcome through the provision of a unique identifier that is logged on all systems from creation to enforcement outcome.

3.4 The development of specific operational outcome fields on our National Operations Database (a structured debriefing section) that allows all staff to provide clear feedback on operational outcomes including encounters where arrests do not occur but intelligence is gathered that is used to enhance subsequent activity.

3.5 As part of this modernisation programme it has been decided to centralise the command of intelligence into two groups, one focusing on strategic intelligence and one on operational intelligence. This approach will support the creation of consistent intelligence procedures and performance standards across the Agency which are aligned to business priorities.

**4. Ensures that asylum support is withdrawn promptly from individuals who are no longer entitled to receive it.**

**4.1 THE UK BORDER AGENCY ACCEPTS THIS RECOMMENDATION**

4.2 The Agency has made considerable efforts to ensure that we withdraw support promptly from those no longer entitled to it. In 2009 we set up a team

to deal with this issue and by working with local asylum leads we reduced losses of this nature from £9.6million in 2008-09 to £245,000 in 2011-12.

4.3 We continue to review cases where losses occur to identify where we can improve our systems and procedures still further and thereby maintain downward pressure.

4.4 At a local level the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Immigration Team has reviewed and strengthened its processes to ensure that support is withdrawn promptly from individuals who are no longer entitled to receive it.

**5. Ensures CID data is accurate and improves its information management and file location abilities, so that all relevant documents are readily available.**

5.1 THE UK BORDER AGENCY ACCEPTS THIS RECOMMENDATION.

5.2 The Agency has accepted the need to improve its ability to locate files consistently and quickly and will be launching software to enhance that capability over the summer. The new Record Management System (RMS) is an industry-standard, off-the-shelf-package provided by our record storage contractors Iron Mountain (UK) customised to meet the Agency's needs bearing in mind our size, structure and geographical coverage. This system will replace the current File Tracking System (FTS) and will provide a comprehensive, web-based tracking capability accessible from POISE desktops.

5.3 The software will be supported by mobile tracking capability that will enable the Agency to track paper records and scanned images (taken from files in storage) at numerous points along their journey, including tracking to individual members of staff, as locations will be linked to cost centres and budget owners. Files will no longer be marked 'in transit'.

5.4 In preparation for the introduction of RMS, business areas will be conducting audits of their locally held stored and live paper files in order to ensure clean data is migrated from the old system to the new. Pilots have shown that we are likely as result to flush out up to 98% of the files currently marked as "lost" on FTS which are in fact simply misfiled in locations that don't currently have access to FTS. Immigration Casework colleagues are intending to link the RMS search capability to Integrity with a daily feed to I-Search, in a future release.

5.5 It is intended that the enhanced location information will create an incentive for operational areas to release files on request to other units (and to the Independent Chief Inspector) because of enhanced confidence that they will subsequently be able to retrieve the file quickly as RMS will contain contact details of the new 'owner'.

Whilst no specific recommendation was made with regards to the handling of complaints the Agency takes the timely handling of complaints very seriously. Since the Complaints Allocation Hub (CAH) was launched for the Agency in September 2011 the timeliness and quality of allocation of complaints to Customer Service Units (CSUs) has vastly improved. Allocation times from the CAH to the CSUs average two days and accuracy exceeds 95%.