



**Independent Chief
Inspector of Borders
and Immigration**

**Annual Report
for the period
1 April 2015
to 31 March 2016**

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Annual Report for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 50 (2) of the UK Borders Act 2007

May 2016



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration,
5th Floor, Globe House,
89 Eccleston Square,
London, SW1V 1PN
United Kingdom

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Contents

Foreword	2
Role and Remit	5
Inspection Findings	9
The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI)	18
Working with Others	20
Resources and Planning	23
Outlook and Plans 2016/17 – 2018/19	25
Appendix 1 Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2015/16	31
Appendix 2 Publications 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016	32

Foreword

A new Independent Chief Inspector

In February 2015, the Home Secretary confirmed my appointment as the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. I took up my new post on 1 May 2015.

This is a public appointment, which meant an open competition run by the Cabinet Office and led by a Public Appointments Assessor, whose job it was to ensure that the process was fair and transparent. Initially, my appointment was for a period of two years. In January 2016, it was extended to April 2020, which empowered me to take a longer-term and more strategic look at the work of the Inspectorate. As a result, in April 2016 I published a three-year programme of inspections that sets out to cover most of the Home Office's border and immigration functions in some depth over the period 2016/17 – 2018/19.

A steep learning curve

The Inspectorate I inherited had achieved a great deal since it began in 2008, and had established a reputation for hard-hitting independence and as a lever for change. Credit must go to my predecessor, John Vine CBE QPM, who was its *de facto* creator and distinguished leader for more than 6 years. John left in December 2014, and one of the two Assistant Chief Inspectors, Garry Cullen OBE, managed the Inspectorate until my arrival. Again, credit goes to Garry for steering the Inspectorate through the interregnum, including for working up the draft 2015/16 Inspection Plan, the final version of which I was able to present to the Home Secretary shortly after taking up my post.

A number of inspections were at various stages of completion when I arrived. In addition to reviewing each of them and taking ownership of the inspection reports and recommendations, a large part of my first few months was devoted to a programme of briefings from the Home Office and others. While I had some experience of multi-agency strategies and operations to tackle organised immigration crime from my years with the National Criminal Intelligence Service (2001-2006) and the Serious Organised Crime Agency (2006-2010), I was keenly aware that my knowledge was dated and incomplete. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to my induction programme.

Over the course of the year, I have visited a number of airports: Heathrow, Gatwick, London City, Manchester and Luton, and have spoken to Border Force officers and airport and airline operators about the twin challenges of securing the border and maintaining an efficient flow of passengers and goods. In May 2015, I visited Dover Port and the juxtaposed controls at Calais and Coquelles. I made a return visit to the latter in October to see what progress had been made during the summer in securing the perimeters to the terminals and reconfiguring the control points in response to the continuing press of migrants looking to breach the controls and enter the UK illegally, putting themselves and others at risk in the process. One of the five major themes of my new three-year programme is 'Protecting the Border', much of the focus of which will be on ports and airports.

I have also visited several office sites around the country, including the UK Visas and Immigration Directorate 'hubs' in Liverpool, Sheffield, Leeds and Croydon, and the Immigration Enforcement office in Manchester, which doubles as a Reporting Centre for migrants subject to reporting conditions. On all of these visits, I have had the opportunity to speak to managers and staff of all grades and to observe them at their work. Like most businesses, the Home Office relies on the capabilities and commitment of its staff. My early impressions, reinforced throughout this first year as I have continued to question and learn, were of large numbers of dedicated and skilled people striving to do a good job, often in difficult circumstances. This view was echoed when I met the national representatives of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and the General

Secretary of the Immigration Services Union (ISU). I have sought to reinforce the importance of capable and committed staff to the efficient and effective delivery of border and immigration functions by making staffing a standing item in all inspections from 2016/17.

Responsibility for inspecting the immigration detention estate rests with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). However, it was clearly important to my overall understanding of the process of detention and its impacts to see detention facilities at first-hand and to meet detainees and detention staff. I therefore visited Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre (IRC), where I also observed restraint training for escorts involved in enforced removals, and I spent a day at Harmondsworth and Colnbrook IRCs with HMIP, who were inspecting the former. I am grateful to HMIP for facilitating this visit, which also enabled me to learn about HMIP's processes and to begin thinking about how we might work more closely together in the future.

The Home Office's borders and immigration work involves and affects a wide range of other parties, and understanding their roles and perspectives has been an essential part of my education. Later in this Report (see 'Working with Others'), I have set out where the Inspectorate has collaborated with stakeholder groups and others during 2015/16, but some warrant a mention here.

In my first few weeks, I met the UK representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), himself new. I had some further contact with UNHCR during 2015/16 (UNHCR is a member of the Inspectorate's Refugee and Asylum Forum (RAF) and of the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information ((IAGCI)). However, I have resolved that in 2016/17 the Inspectorate will develop a closer working relationship with UNHCR, including with the team embedded within the Home Office looking at the quality of asylum decisions.

In the autumn, I visited Freedom from Torture and Asylum Aid, and also Cedars, the Pre-Departure Accommodation used for families subject to removal from the UK, where I met the contractors responsible for managing the facility, G4S, and Barnardo's who look after the welfare of the families while they are in residence. For similar reasons, but on a different tack, I had meetings with the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and with the Chief Executive of Universities UK, which I found helpful, not least as Tier 4 (Student) visas featured in a number of inspections in 2015/16 and will remain of interest over the next few years. These visits helped me to understand better the impact on individuals of certain border and immigration decisions, and I am grateful to everyone I met for their insights. I concluded that the Inspectorate needed to do more to engage its many 'stakeholders' and have created a new role specifically for this purpose.

Andrew Jordan, a First Tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum) Judge, has been a key member of the IAGCI for some years. Andrew kindly organised for me to sit in on a number of Appeal and Judicial Review hearings, and to meet his fellow judges, which I found instructive. Previous inspections have noted the importance of the Home Office learning from litigation and rulings against its decisions. But, I feel the Inspectorate should take more of an interest in this area (as did the Home Affairs Select Committee when I appeared before it in December 2015), and I have included the Home Office's handling of litigation and organisational learning in my Plan for 2016/17.

Thanks to Mark Rimmer, Head of Brent and Barnet Registration and Nationality Service, in September I was invited to attend the annual Pan-London Citizenship Ceremony at City Hall. I witnessed thirty-two new British citizens, one for every London borough, swearing their affirmation of allegiance to Queen and country in front of friends, family and a colourful array of mayoral robes and chains. The Inspectorate has previously examined the granting of citizenship and the routes to it, including in 2015/16 in the inspection of Settlement Casework. This topic will continue to be of interest, and is captured in my three-year programme.

I also visited the overseas Visa Hubs in Istanbul and Amman. The latter visit was in connection with an inspection of Family Reunion casework, due to report in summer 2016, but it also enabled me to learn at first-hand from UK officials, their international counterparts, UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), about the response to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, including

the various international resettlement programmes. I provided ministers and officials with feedback from my visit to Jordan, and have included an inspection of the UK's Syrian resettlement programme in my planning for 2017/18.

My statutory responsibilities include comparing the Home Office's '*practice and performance ... to other persons doing similar things*'. This is more difficult than it might appear. Looking internationally, during 2015/16 I met the Minister-Counsellor (Immigration and Border Security) from the Australian High Commission with a visiting colleague from the Visa Regulatory Reform Task Force in the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. I also received a delegation from the United Arab Emirates, which was headed by the General Inspector of the Ministry of Interior, whose remit includes border and immigration controls. While I found these meetings worthwhile, they showed that it was not possible to make direct international comparisons, since the border and immigration challenges and opportunities were quite different.

However, it is possible to find recognised standards and examples of public and private sector 'best practice' against which to compare the Home Office's practice and performance more generally. For example, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's 2009 *Principles of Good Complaint Handling*, which identified six key principles to help public bodies deliver first-class complaint handling to their customers, provided the perfect benchmark for my inspection of complaints handling, which was published in March 2016. Wherever possible, I intend to look for similar points of reference so that inspections test the Home Office not only against its own stated rules, guidelines and standards, but also against relevant external comparators.

Throughout the year, I have had meetings with the Home Secretary, the Immigration Minister and the Home Office Permanent Under Secretary (PUS), and from his appointment in September 2015 with the Second PUS, who took responsibility for all Home Office border and immigration functions. I have also met regularly with the Directors General for Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration. As well as discussing specific inspections, these meetings have been important in establishing the necessary professional and productive working relationships.

Looking ahead

Over the course of 2015/16, I believe I have learned a great deal about many of the border and immigration functions exercised by and on behalf of the Home Secretary. This has been essential to understanding the context for the Inspectorate's work, to landing its reports and recommendations effectively, and to developing a balanced and focused forward programme of inspections.

I am also conscious that I still have much to learn, and that the business of borders and immigration is constantly changing. Consequently, while the number of visits might reduce, I will continue to engage the Home Office and stakeholders, not just in the course of particular inspections but routinely and regularly, to ensure that I am well informed and understand their issues and concerns.

In doing so, I am acutely aware of the need to preserve my independence. While most interlocutors will understandably try to persuade me to their point of view, I am confident of my ability to remain independent. This confidence comes from the Inspectorate's processes, which are ordered and thorough, and from its way of reporting and making recommendations, which is dispassionate and evidence-based. It also comes from the recognition that the Independent Chief Inspector's power (I am not a regulator and cannot compel the Home Office to make changes) comes from the Inspectorate's reputation and record, which would be fatally damaged should my independence be compromised.



David Bolt

Independent Chief Inspector

April 2016

Role and Remit

Legislative Framework

The role of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (until 2012, the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency) was established by the UK Borders Act 2007. Sections 48-56 of the UK Borders Act 2007 (as amended) provide the legislative framework for the inspection of the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of functions relating to immigration, asylum, nationality and customs by the Home Secretary and by any person exercising such functions on her behalf.¹

The legislation empowers the Independent Chief Inspector to monitor, report on and make recommendations about all such functions. However, functions exercised at removal centres, short-term holding facilities and under escort arrangements are excepted insofar as these are subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons or Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary (and equivalents in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

The legislation directs the Independent Chief Inspector to consider and make recommendations about, in particular:

- consistency of approach;
- the practice and performance of listed persons compared to other persons doing similar activities;
- the procedure in making decisions;
- the treatment of claimants and applicants;
- certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (c. 41) (unfounded claim);
- the law about discrimination in the exercise of functions, including reliance on section 19D of the Race Relations Act 1976 (c. 74) (exception for immigration functions);
- the procedure in relation to the exercise of enforcement powers (including powers of arrest, entry, search and seizure);
- practice and procedure in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of offences;
- the procedure in relation to the conduct of criminal proceedings;
- customs functions have been appropriately exercised by the Secretary of State and the Director of Border Revenue;
- the provision of information;
- the handling of complaints; and
- the content of information about conditions in countries outside the United Kingdom, which the Secretary of State compiles and makes available, for purposes connected with immigration and asylum, to immigration officers and other officials.

¹ Since 2009, the Independent Chief Inspector has also held the statutory role of Independent Monitor for Entry Clearance Refusals without the Right of Appeal. The role of the Independent Monitor was set out in section 23 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and amended by paragraph 27 of schedule 7 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. The functions of this role are absorbed into the Inspectorate's overall programme of inspections, in particular its inspections of overseas visa posts.

In addition, the legislation enables the Secretary of State to request the Independent Chief Inspector to report to her in writing in relation to specified matters. These requests are normally referred to as 'Home Secretary Commissions'.

Section 51 of the UK Borders Act 2007 covers the planning process for inspections, which includes the requirement to consult the Secretary of State when preparing a plan (in practice, the overall plan for the year). The 2015/16 Annual Plan was published on the Inspectorate website in May 2015. The Outlook and Plan 2016/17 - 2018/19 is detailed later in this Report. It was discussed with the Home Secretary on 21 March 2016.

The legislation also requires the Independent Chief Inspector to prepare a plan for each proposed inspection that describes its objectives and terms of reference. In order to give effect to the legislation, and to ensure that inspections proceed efficiently, the Inspectorate and the Home Office have agreed a Protocol that defines responsibilities, processes, and timescales for both.

Notwithstanding the above, the legislation makes it clear that the Independent Chief Inspector is not prevented from doing anything that is not mentioned in any plan.

With regard to reporting, the legislation requires the Independent Chief Inspector to report in writing to the Secretary of State in relation to the performance of the functions specified. In practice, this means submitting a written inspection report for each inspection, plus an Annual Report. The Secretary of State lays all reports before Parliament, which she has committed to do within eight weeks of receipt, subject to both Houses of Parliament being in session.

Reports are published in full except for any material that the Secretary of State determines it is undesirable to publish for reasons of national security or where publication might jeopardise an individual's safety, in which case the legislation permits the Secretary of State to omit the relevant passages from the published report. There were no redactions to any of the reports published in 2015/16. As soon as a report has been laid in Parliament, it is published on the Inspectorate's website, together with the Home Office's response to the report and recommendations.

A Revised Inspection Process

While the legislation covers in detail what the Independent Chief Inspector is directed to consider, it does not prescribe how inspections are to be conducted.

From May, I began reviewing the Inspectorate's processes and approach. I wanted to ensure we were efficient, forensic and impartial in everything we did; that we challenged inefficiency, ineffectiveness or inconsistency wherever we found it, but also recognised good practice; that we were capable of delivering hard messages, but in ways that were constructive, and always with a commitment to helping to bring about improvements.

As of 1 October 2015, I introduced a revised inspection process, the main aim of which was to shorten and standardise the time taken from the start of an inspection to the delivery of the completed report to the Home Secretary, without compromising quality. As well as demonstrating that in making recommendations to the Home Office regarding efficiency, effectiveness and consistency the Inspectorate was itself efficient, effective and consistent, a shorter process meant there was less risk that reports and recommendations would be overtaken by events, reducing their impact and value. Meanwhile, standardising the length of inspections makes it easier to plan and make best use of available resources. It also makes it easier to avoid the publication of reports being delayed because the eight week point falls within a Parliamentary recess.

The revised process for a 'standard' inspection is 100 days/20 weeks from start to delivery of the completed inspection report to the Home Secretary. Inspection teams vary in size and composition,

but the working assumption is that a 'standard' inspection will require 350 days of work in total. The process is in three stages:

Stage 1: Planning (4 weeks), involving

- Scoping
 - Open source research
 - Preliminary evidence request
 - Familiarisation visit(s)
- Project Initiation Document sign off by the Independent Chief Inspector
- Formal notification to the Home Office and full evidence request
- Stakeholder engagement – requests for written submissions.

Stage 2: Inspecting (8 weeks), involving

- Evidence analysis, including sampling of case files
- Stakeholder meeting(s)
- On-site visit
 - Interviews
 - Focus Groups
 - Observations
- Review by the Independent Chief Inspector
- Further evidence request (if required).

Stage 3: Reporting (8 weeks), involving

- Presentation of emerging findings to the Home Office
- Drafting of report
- Factual accuracy check of draft report by the Home Office
- Report finalised and sent to the Home Secretary.

'Short' inspections will follow the same process, but the aim will be to complete them within 12-16 weeks (with an overall allocation of 200 working days).

Statement of Purpose

As well as reviewing the inspection process, I have looked at what the Inspectorate said and thought about itself, since this affects how we go about our task and how others see us.

In revising the Inspectorate's Statement of Purpose (found on the inside cover of all of our inspection reports) I have tried to emphasise that we set out to be helpful, and not as some might suspect to find fault, and that we rely on and report only on what we find.

The revised Statement of Purpose is:

To help improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office's border and immigration functions through unfettered, impartial and evidence-based inspection.

Vision Statement

Along with the revised Statement of Purpose, I reworked our Vision Statement. While this is also public-facing, it provides Inspectorate staff with a clear understanding of the behaviours and standards I expect of them and what they can expect in return. The new Vision Statement states that the Inspectorate will:

- be highly-skilled, professional and effective, with a reputation for the highest standards of work and conduct;
- operate thorough, rigorous and transparent processes to reach sound, evidence-based conclusions;
- deal with others consistently and reliably;
- be efficient, forward-thinking, committed to continuous improvement and focused on delivery; and
- enable and develop its people.

The Vision Statement is underpinned by a new approach to staff training, development and assignment that is covered in the later Resources and Planning section.

Revised Protocol

The revised inspection process meant that the Protocol between the Inspectorate and the Home Office also needed to be revised, in particular to ensure that the agreed timescales for Home Office responses at various stages of the process matched the new, shorter inspection timelines. A new Protocol was signed in January 2016.

I would like here to acknowledge the help that I have received throughout the year from the Home Office team responsible for day-to-day coordination between the Inspectorate and the department. The team's role includes helping to resolve any issues that might arise in relation to the application or interpretation of the protocol, and this included brokering the revisions with the relevant Directors General. In practice, it is where the Inspectorate turns first for information and to complain, and ensures it manages its intermediary and fixer roles efficiently, impartially and with good humour.



Inspection Findings

All of the 2015/16 inspection reports that have been laid before Parliament can be found in full on the Inspectorate website, together with the Home Office response to the reports and to each of my recommendations. Therefore, I shall restrict myself here to noting some important themes.

Legacy

In his valedictory Annual Report, published in December 2014, John Vine referred to the Home Office having made ‘measurable progress’ but said ‘much remains to be done’ and ‘challenges persist that impact on public confidence’. He also said that there was ‘too much evidence the Home Office does not get the basics right’, including the ‘quality and consistency of decision making’; having ‘caseworkers with the right skills’; aligning ‘resources with priorities’; and generating ‘quality management information to enable strategy and resourcing decisions’.

He referred to a number of areas of concern:

- levels of customs activity at the border (passport checks had improved but at the expense of customs activity);
- proper and proportionate use of powers;
- the effectiveness of identification and removal of those with no right to remain;
- lack of Quality Assurance and senior managers’ lack of awareness of backlogs;
- strategic cohesion between Home Office directorates; and
- planning and implementation of change – which repeated inspections had found to have been poorly handled.

To a degree, the agenda was set for me. Certainly, I had these points very much in mind when considering the 2015/16 Inspection Plan, and I have reflected on them during each inspection.

One Year On

During 2015/16, I have seen evidence for all of John’s concerns. Consequently, they have informed my choice of inspection topics, the scoping of individual inspections, and the focus of the Inspectorate’s work for 2016/17 – 2018/19.

Based on the inspections completed in 2015/16, and my own observations and discussions with the Home Office and with stakeholders, I would add the following to the list:

- the effectiveness of interactions with other government departments, agencies (including the police) and with private contractors;
- the difficulties of running prevention, protection and enforcement agendas, and of managing unpredictable volumes, alongside commitments to excellent customer service;
- the agility to respond quickly to new threats and challenges; and
- the capability to identify, develop and deploy technological solutions to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency.

Summary of Findings from 2015/16 Inspections

Thirteen inspection reports were published in 2015/16. These contained 94 recommendations, of which the Home Office accepted 77 (82%) in full, and a further 14 (15%) in part. Three recommendations were rejected. The Home Office's detailed response to each recommendation can be found on the Inspectorate's website.

Following the pattern of previous Annual Reports, the reports are grouped below under the three Home Office Directorates responsible for delivery of the bulk of border and immigration functions: Border Force; Immigration Enforcement; and UK Visa and Immigration. Because of the way functions are organised, inspections have tended to focus on one or other Directorate, as have recommendations for improvement. However, inspections have, where relevant, looked at the 'hand offs' between the Directorates, as well as with partner agencies and contractors.

Border Force

An inspection of Border Force operations at Heathrow Airport – published in July 2015

This inspection examined Border Force immigration and customs operations at London Heathrow Airport (LHR), focusing primarily on Terminal 5. LHR is the biggest and busiest airport in the UK, and Terminal 5 is its busiest terminal. In the 12 months to April 2014, Terminal 5 handled over 13 million passenger arrivals.

The inspection found that Border Force at LHR had made a number of improvements since the last inspection (in 2012) and, for the most part, was performing effectively and efficiently. The Border Force Operating Mandate, published in 2012, was widely understood and was making a positive difference to the management of the passengers arriving at the Primary (Immigration) Control Point and to ensuring officers maintained a balance between border security and customer service. Overall, the quality of decisions made to refuse entry was good, and Border Force Officers interacted professionally with passengers both at the immigration and at the customs controls. However, the inspection also found some areas of poor performance, in particular around record keeping, including the use and storage of notebooks, which had been identified as a weakness in a number of previous reports, and the consistent exercising of customs powers.

The report made six recommendations, all of which were accepted.

An inspection of General Aviation and General Maritime – published in January 2016

This inspection examined the effectiveness and efficiency of Border Force's immigration and customs controls of passengers and goods entering and leaving the UK on non-scheduled aircraft (excluding military flights) and via maritime traffic (including yachts, tugs, Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs), small motor boats and some small commercial vessels), referred to respectively as General Aviation (GA) and General Maritime (GM). It examined Border Force only, but noted where Border Force's work was informed by, abutted or supported the work of other government departments and agencies involved with the UK's wider aviation and maritime security strategies.

Earlier inspections by the Inspectorate and others had recognised the significant challenges small air and seaports presented to Border Force, but identified the need to improve knowledge and understanding of the threats and risks associated with GA and GM. Most recently, the National Audit Office's (NAO) 2013 report 'The Border Force: securing the border' had found there were 'gaps in the Border Force's information about people and goods entering the country.' The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) had recommended that: 'The Border Force must address the gaps in the data it receives on people arriving in the UK, and the existing data needs to be cleansed to increase the quality, reliability and usefulness of the intelligence generated, to help the Border Force better align its resources to its priorities.' Against this background, the inspection examined Border Force's capture of and response to information about GA and GM movements.

The inspection found that levels of knowledge and understanding of the threats and risks remained generally poor. However, the system of General Aviation Reports (GARs) and the General Aviation Risk Assessment Tool (GARAT), if used correctly and consistently, provided Border Force with an efficient and effective way of managing its response to GA flights. While there were gaps and inconsistencies in working practices, overall, Border Force was making good use of GARs and GARATs for immigration purposes, less obviously so for customs purposes. Coverage of GM was poor by comparison, in large part because of the absence of information in advance about GM arrivals, over which Border Force had little immediate control. Nonetheless, Border Force had not been efficient or effective enough within current limitations, or in improving its coverage in the longer-term, although it had more recently recognised the need to address this.

The report made nine recommendations, eight of which were accepted, and one was accepted in part.

Immigration Enforcement

An inspection of how the Home Office tackles illegal working – published in December 2015

This inspection focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of efforts by the Home Office's Immigration, Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) teams to tackle known and suspected instances of illegal working. Part of Immigration Enforcement, ICE teams have powers to interview, arrest and detain immigration offenders found working illegally. The inspection looked at whether these powers were being exercised in accordance with the law and with Home Office guidance. It also looked at the effectiveness of the Immigration Enforcement team levying civil penalties against employers who had failed to conduct 'right to work' checks. Prior to 2014, the primary focus for ICE teams had been enforcement visits to businesses, mostly restaurants and takeaways, to locate and arrest illegal workers with a view to their enforced removal from the UK. In 2014, the emphasis shifted to 'educational' visits to encourage employers to comply with their obligations, and as a result to deny illegal migrants easy access to paid work and increase the numbers leaving the UK voluntarily.

The comparative effectiveness of this 'new' approach was hard to assess. However, the Home Office's interim evaluation of an Operation in the areas with the highest known numbers of illegal workers indicated that it had increased voluntary departures. Alongside this, Immigration Enforcement had identified and implemented, or had begun to implement, a number of improvements in related processes, for example: widening the allocation of biometric residence permits to make it easier for employers to check employees' documents; reviewing operational guidance and making it more accessible; and enhancing local assurance regimes.

The inspection confirmed the need for these improvements and others. It found weaknesses and inconsistencies in operational training and practice. For example, after initial training, new ICE team members were mentored within their team, but this was not supported centrally and therefore varied in content and quality. Detailed examination of 293 official notebooks and other records identified poor record keeping and failures to comply with guidance (and, in some instances, with legislation) in relation to obtaining lawful entry to premises, pursuit of individuals away from target premises, cautioning, questioning and use of handcuffs.

The report made eight recommendations, with an emphasis on operational training, supervision and assurance, of which seven were accepted and one was rejected. The rejected recommendation was that the Home Office should produce information and advice for businesses in the first language of business owners and managers most encountered during compliance and enforcement visits, both to hand out and made available online.

An inspection of Removals – published in December 2015

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness with which the Home Office removed or encouraged the voluntary departure of individuals and families with no legal right to remain in the UK, looking at the timeliness of removals or departures and the causes of failed removals and

the actions taken to mitigate them. Enforcing removal is costly and complex. The Home Office therefore looks to encourage voluntary departures, employing various incentives and reserving enforced removal for cases where voluntary departure will not work or is not appropriate. Individuals opting for voluntary departure are able to have their return paid for at public expense, although this will extend the length of time before they may apply to re-enter the UK. Enforced removals result in a ten-year re-entry ban. The Immigration Act 2014 contained a package of measures aimed at maximising voluntary returns through the creation of a 'hostile environment' for individuals without the legal right to remain in the UK. New legislative measures included making it more difficult to open a bank account, to obtain rented accommodation and to apply for a driving licence.

The inspection found there had been a significant increase in the numbers of individuals who had opted to depart voluntarily using the Home Office's voluntary departure services. Advance Passenger Information (API) had also identified increased numbers of individuals with no right to remain departing without notifying the Home Office or availing themselves of such services, though the increase needed to be seen in the context of improved data collection. Operationally, the inspection identified a disconnect between the work of the National Removals Command (NRC) and front-line enforcement teams, with at least some of the latter questioning the effectiveness of the NRC and arguing that enforced removals performance had deteriorated since it was created. The NRC argued that performance had varied from team to team. Irrespective of these arguments, the NRC and enforcement teams needed to align themselves better, not least to ensure that enforcement operations were cost effective, reducing instances where immigration offenders were detained but had to be released because there were no available detention beds (and, in a significant number of cases, then absconded).

The removal of families was yet more complex and created additional challenges. The Home Office had introduced Family Engagement Managers (FEMs) to encourage and assist with family removals, particularly those families who were resistant to the idea of departing. However, the inspection found that FEMs were too often engaged in minor administrative tasks in support of families who had indicated an intention to depart voluntarily. This was not the best use of their specialist training or grade.

The report made seven recommendations, of which five were accepted and two accepted in part.

An inspection of Home Office Removals contracts and Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation – published in March 2016

This inspection examined three areas of Immigration Enforcement's (IE) business that had been outsourced to private contractors. Each contributed to the enforced removal from the UK of migrants with no right to remain. Two were part of the same process: the escorting of migrants to the country to which they are being returned; and the provision of travel tickets for escorts and returnees, including those returned unescorted. The third concerned Cedars, the Pre-Departure Accommodation (PDA) opened in 2011 for families with children under the age of 18.

The effectiveness and efficiency of such functions, and the Home Office's management of the relevant commercial contracts, fall within the Independent Chief Inspector's statutory remit and are subject to inspection in the same way as border and immigration functions delivered entirely from within the Home Office. The public sector's use of private contractors is of abiding interest to a wide range of people, and there is a reasonable expectation that where functions have been outsourced they are being delivered to a high standard, in terms of quality, consistency and value, and that this can be demonstrated. In 2013, the Cabinet Office had identified how the management of commercial contracts across the Civil Service needed to improve, and the inspection found that the Home Office had made the recommended improvements, including introducing formal senior oversight of major contracts, recruiting staff with commercial expertise, and changing contract monitoring to involve both operational and commercial managers. An external review commissioned by the Home Office in 2014 had pointed to other areas that needed to be addressed, such as an over-reliance on contractor data and self-reporting on performance.

The inspection found that this remained an issue. All of the contracts inspected pre-dated 2013. Over their life, the contractors and the Home Office had identified elements of the contracts that did not work for them and proposed various adjustments. Where accepted, these were pragmatic and struck a balance between the interests of the contractor and those of the Home Office. However, the parties were generally slow to resolve their issues and reach agreement. The Home Office needed to learn from experience when agreeing the terms of any new contracts in this area, in particular with regard to performance standards, and to move more swiftly when delivery was not meeting operational needs.

The report made eight recommendations, all of which were accepted.

UK Visas and Immigration

An inspection of the effectiveness of the monitoring of Tier 4 Sponsor licences – published in July 2015

This inspection examined how effectively the Home Office monitored Tier 4 sponsors' compliance with their sponsor duties, and also looked at its handling of investigations into sponsors linked to English Language Test Centres operated by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) following allegations of systematic cheating.

The inspection found that the investigations (known as Operation Firewall) had been handled well. Managers and staff had worked efficiently and effectively to visit and assess the large number of colleges identified as linked to ETS and to maintain, suspend or revoke sponsor licences. Operation Firewall removed licences from more than 50 non-compliant sponsors. Pre-Firewall, there had been weaknesses in procedures and practice, in particular reports of visits to sponsors lacked detail where the sponsor was deemed fully-compliant and there was little or no management oversight of visits or reports, meaning that cases of non-compliance had been missed. Post-Firewall, a dedicated Tier 4 compliance network was created to deal with complex cases, and improvements were made to the scrutiny of new licence applications and secure English Language Test providers, making it much less likely that non-compliance would go unnoticed.

The report made five recommendations, all of which the Home Office accepted.

An inspection of Family Visitor visa applications – published in July 2015

This inspection examined the impact of the removal of full appeal rights on Family Visitor visa applicants by assessing the quality of Home Office decision-making in respect of applications. These rights were removed in June 2013 by virtue of section 52 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013, at which time the Home Office argued their removal would bring these applicants into line with other categories of visitor. This would lift the burden of processing 40-50,000 Family Visitor visa appeals a year, freeing UKVI staff to concentrate on other functions and saving an estimated £107m over 10 years.

The inspection found that removal of full appeal rights had not led to a higher refusal rate, or to an overall reduction in decision quality. UKVI had taken steps to train staff, to improve processes, and to balance the requirements of risk management and customer service. However, there were inconsistencies in the handling of applications across different visa posts, with some inadequate record-keeping, which created a danger of unequal and unfair treatment for some applicants.

The report made seven recommendations, focused primarily on clarifying expected standards and improving consistency of delivery: six were accepted and one accepted in part.

A short-notice inspection of the Amman Visa Section – published in October 2015

This inspection examined the quality of decision making by the visa section in Amman, one of five decision-making ‘hubs’ in UKVI’s Middle East and Pakistan region, which in 2014 processed approximately 36,000 applications across all categories. It also examined the reasonableness of decisions on ‘Other Visitor’ visa applications, which include tourist, business visitor and short-term student visas.

The inspection found that the Amman visa section had improved the quality of its decision making and record keeping since last inspected in 2010, with the UKVI Operating Mandate, introduced in November 2014, having had a positive effect. Managers and staff in Amman showed a strong commitment to customer service in their efforts to keep to service standards. However, a lack of attention to detail in some instances had led to evidence being misinterpreted or overlooked and to inconsistency in both the issuing and refusal of visas. Too many refusal notices were still unbalanced, giving little or no indication that positive evidence submitted in support of an application had been considered, and therefore leaving the applicant uncertain as to what evidence would be required to support any subsequent application.

The report made five recommendations, four of which were accepted and one accepted in part.

An unannounced inspection of the service provided by Solihull Premium Service Centre – published in October 2015

This inspection examined Solihull Premium Service Centre (PSC). PSCs offer a ‘premium’ same day service to non-European nationals making straightforward applications to settle in the UK, and to certain categories of applicants who want to extend their leave to remain in the UK. The cost of this premium service is £400, plus the application fee for a standard postal application. Solihull is one of seven PSCs in the UK which offer this service. The others are in Belfast, Cardiff, Liverpool, Sheffield, Croydon (inspected in 2010) and Glasgow (inspected in 2014).

The inspection found that, overall, Solihull PSC was performing effectively and efficiently, with the vast majority of applicants receiving a same day decision, and with any delayed decisions explained to the applicant and with the case being actively progressed. However, the inspection found that UKVI was acting unreasonably in retaining both the premium application fee and the standard fee paid by those applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) who had applied for the premium service before they were qualified to do so. One such instance was identified during the inspection at Solihull.

The report made one recommendation, which addressed this issue, and which was partially accepted by the Home Office.

An inspection of Settlement Casework – published in November 2015

The inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Home Office’s management and processing of Settlement applications. Settled persons have the right to stay permanently in the UK, are free to live, work and study in the UK without restriction, and can access public funds, including welfare benefits. A settled person has the right to apply for British citizenship after a qualifying period, and any children born in the UK to a settled person are British. The inspection focused on applications made in the UK and processed by Settlement Casework, part of UKVI, and specifically on Tier 2, Domestic Violence and Settlement Protection applications, because of their high volumes or complexity.

The inspection found that in the vast majority of cases Settlement applications were being handled efficiently and effectively; that is in line with Immigration Rules, the UKVI Operating Mandate and guidance, published service standards and internal quality targets. The inspection identified a small number of cases, both grants and refusals, where the Rules or guidance had not been correctly applied, and rather more where the record keeping was deficient, which pointed to a need for more

training and support of caseworkers, particularly those dealing with complex cases, such as Domestic Violence applications. It argued that the six month service standard for a decision for straightforward postal applications was generous. Whether straightforward or complex, processing applications needed to be as quick as possible, in particular where a refusal was likely, since delays could mean that the opportunity to remove an individual whose ILR was revoked was lost.

The report made twelve recommendations, of which the Home Office accepted eleven and rejected one: that the Home Office should introduce a shorter service standard for straightforward postal applications.

An inspection of Asylum Casework (March – July 2015) – published in February 2016

This inspection considered the efficiency and effectiveness of the Home Office's asylum casework operations (the handling of claims for protection in accordance with the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Asylum Qualification Directive 2004), and the quality of decision making. It examined the registration, screening and routing process; how substantive asylum interviews were conducted and whether material facts were captured and probed; and whether decision making was in accordance with the Immigration Rules (Paragraphs 328-333B) and Home Office guidance. It also examined routing of applicants for consideration under the Detained Fast Track (DFT) procedures; the Third Country Unit's (TCU) management of cases; and the process for considering further leave applications by Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

The inspection found that the Home Office had made significant improvements in its management of asylum casework during 2014/15, meeting its aim of deciding all straightforward claims made on or after 1 April 2014 within six months, while successfully clearing all straightforward claims lodged before 1 April 2014 by 31 March 2015. Non-straightforward cases were being monitored effectively and decided quickly once barriers had been removed. This provided the Home Office with a solid base from which to respond to the challenge of the rising asylum intake in 2015/16. Areas for improvement included aspects of the screening process, which the Home Office's own internal quality assurance processes had also identified, and the management of further leave applications from unaccompanied asylum seeking children to reduce delays and to maintain contact with the claimant. However, the most serious failings concerned the way allegations of torture were managed, where neither the Immigration Rule 35 process nor the Medico-Legal Report process was working as intended.²

The inspection did not set out to test claims that a 'culture of disbelief' exists within the Home Office. It found that decision makers, and other staff within Asylum Operations, were professional, dedicated, and demonstrated a commitment to fairness. However, the quality of interviewing and decision making needed to improve, along with the recording of the reasons for decisions. At the time of the inspection, the Home Office was introducing a range of improvement measures, including revised credibility training.

The report made nine recommendations, five of which were accepted and four accepted in part.

A short notice inspection of the Tier 4 Curtailment process – published in March 2016

This inspection considered the efficiency and effectiveness of the Home Office's management of the Tier 4 (student visa) Curtailment process. It examined how the Home Office handled notifications from sponsors (licensed educational establishments) of a change in a student's circumstances

² The report identified that asylum claimants who claimed to be victims of torture were waiting significantly longer for a medico-legal report (MLR) than the five months contained in the Home Office's Asylum Policy guidance. It referred to 'lengthy delays, typically around two years' for the DFT cases sampled at random as part of the inspection. Following publication of the report, Freedom from Torture, one of the two organisations from whom the Home Office accepted MLRs wrote to the Chief Inspector to clarify that in 2014 it had produced MLRs within the five months in over 70% of cases. The other organisation, the Helen Bamber Foundation (HBF), received significantly higher referrals due to its wider remit including torture, human trafficking and other serious harm, and therefore experienced the most difficulty. HBF highlighted that the number of referrals from detention they received in 2015 (793) had increased by almost tenfold from those received in 2011 (81) and in 2012 (87).

that would affect their sponsorship; for example, failure to enrol on their course, a pattern of unauthorised absences, withdrawal or expulsion, or early completion of their studies. It looked at the Home Office's checking of these cases, decision making regarding curtailment of the student's leave to remain in the UK (or cancellation of leave to enter), and subsequent actions. In 2014/15, the Home Office issued over 60,000 Tier 4 visas, roughly 25,000 fewer than the previous year, which the Home Office attributed to the tightening up (from October 2014) of the Tier 4 visa entry route to make it less prone to abuse. In 2013/14 and in 2014/15 it received 86,000 notifications from Tier 4 sponsors, and over the two years it curtailed almost 44,000 visas.

The inspection found that the creation of a dedicated Curtailment Team had resulted in significant progress in reducing the large volume of outstanding notifications that had built up by 2012, and that the Home Office was largely on top of new notifications. Security checks were carried out consistently and thoroughly, and a Decision Quality Framework had been introduced (in October 2014) that set clear expectations of caseworkers and monitored and measured performance. However, the inspection also identified a number of areas for improvement, including providing direct feedback to sponsors to clarify their reporting obligations and reduce the high levels of unnecessary notifications, and the time taken to progress notifications to the point where a consideration of curtailment was made.

Of most concern were Curtailment Not Pursued (CNP) cases, which included those who had a period of leave remaining that was shorter than the time they would be allowed to 'wrap-up' their stay and depart, plus those who had already overstayed. There was no process in place to monitor CNP cases to ensure that individuals with no right to remain in the UK had in fact departed voluntarily or, where necessary, had been identified for enforcement action. In the two years to April 2015, the Home Office made 71,601 CNP decisions. Many of these individuals may have departed the UK, or may have been granted leave to remain on other grounds. However, the true position, including the number and whereabouts of those who have remained in the UK illegally, was not known.

The report made nine recommendations, six of which were accepted and two accepted in part. One recommendation was rejected: that the Home Office should publish service standards for the curtailment consideration process.

All Three Directorates

An inspection of the handling of Complaints and MPs' Correspondence (July – September 2015) – published in March 2016

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the handling of public complaints and correspondence from MPs by Border Force, UK Visas and Immigration and Immigration Enforcement. How well a public body handles complaints about the service it provides, or about the conduct of its staff, is rightly regarded as a key measure of its performance, as well as having a significant impact on public perceptions of its work. Good complaint handling requires organisation, effort and commitment from management. For its benchmark, the inspection relied heavily on *Principles of Good Complaint Handling*, published in 2009 by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), which identified six key principles to help public bodies deliver first-class complaint handling to their customers. These included being customer focused, being open and accountable, acting fairly and proportionately, and putting things right.

The inspection found evidence of good practice, in particular the 'clear and simple' procedures for making complaints, which were accessible through Home Office websites and in leaflets and posters, and the proactive and personalised service provided to MPs, which had improved the quality and timeliness of responses significantly since this area was inspected in 2010. However, it also found inconsistent guidance for complaint handlers, poor record keeping, including tracking of complaints to ensure that they receive a satisfactory and timely response, and failure to pursue all reasonable lines of enquiry in respect of minor misconduct complaints. These findings echoed a report issued

by PHSO in November 2015, based on its investigation of 158 complaints from 2014/15, which referred to the Home Office's poor complaint handling, citing delays, poor decision making and not doing enough to put things right and learn from mistakes.

The report made eight recommendations, of which six were accepted and two accepted in part.

'Live' inspections as at 31 March 2016

Eleven inspections that were begun in 2015/16 were at various stages of completion as at 31 March 2016. They (working titles) are as follows, in the order they are due to report to the Home Secretary:

- An inspection of Border Force operations at Manchester Airport, reported in February 2016, published 13 April 2016.
- An inspection of the Administrative Review processes introduced following the 2014 Immigration Act, commissioned by the Home Secretary in June 2015, due to report in April 2016.
- An inspection of Immigration Enforcement's response to 'lorry drops', including collaboration with police forces, started in October 2015, due to report in April 2016.
- An inspection of the collection and use of intelligence by Border Force and Immigration Enforcement, started in October 2015, due to report in May 2016.
- An inspection of Family Reunion applications, started in January 2016, due to report in June 2016.
- An inspection of the Immigration Act 2014 provisions to revoke driving licences held by illegal migrants, started in January 2016, due to report in June 2016.
- An inspection of the Immigration Act 2014 provisions to deny bank and building society accounts to illegal migrants, started in January 2016, due to report in June 2016.
- An inspection of customs controls at Coventry and Langley postal hubs, started in March 2016, due to report in July 2016.
- An inspection of identification by the police, flagging to the Home Office and status checking, of arrested foreign nationals, started in February 2016, due to report in July 2016.
- An inspection of failed right of abode applications and referrals for immigration enforcement action, started in February 2016, due to report in July 2016.
- An inspection of immigration status checks within civil registration processes, started in March 2016, due to report in August 2016.



The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI)

Purpose

Section 48 (2) (j) of the UK Borders Act 2007 states that the Chief Inspector shall consider and make recommendations about ‘the content of information and conditions in countries outside the United Kingdom which the Secretary of State compiles and makes available, for purposes connected with immigration and asylum, to immigration and other officials.’

The Independent Advisory group on Country Information (IAGCI) was established in 2009 to advise the Chief Inspector about the content and quality of country of origin (CoI) information and guidance notes produced by the Home Office and relied upon by decision makers.

The IAGCI commissions and quality assures reviews from independent reviewers, typically academics with relevant knowledge and expertise. The IAGCI selects CoI material for review according to the frequency and extent to which it is being used by the Home Office, and invites tenders from qualified reviewers. The work is funded from the Inspectorate’s budget.

As part of my review of all of the Inspectorate’s processes, towards the end of 2015/16 I assigned an inspector to the IAGCI with the aim of aligning its work more closely with the Inspectorate’s other inspection work. This is likely to result in some changes to the way that IAGCI reports are delivered to the Home Office from 2016/17, but not to the IAGCI’s purpose, shape and way of working with reviewers.

Membership

Membership of the IAGCI is voluntary and unpaid. The members are respected academics and representatives of organisations with a working interest in CoI material and how it is used by the Home Office. I am grateful to all of the members for their time and expertise, without which I could not fulfil this important part of my remit. I would particularly like to thank Dr Laura Hammond, who continued to serve as Chair, having taken on this role in April 2013, not least for her efforts in helping me to understand this complex area of the Inspectorate’s business.

List of Members

Independent members:

- Dr Laura Hammond (School of Oriental and African Studies)
- Dr Mike Collyer (Sussex University)
- Dr Ceri Oeppen (Sussex University)
- Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (London School of Economics)
- Dr Patricia Daley (Oxford University).

Representative members:

- Mr Andrew Jordan (Asylum and Immigration Tribunal)
- Katinka Ridderbos (UNHCR, Geneva)
- Harriet Short (Immigration Law Practitioners' Association).

Meetings

During 2015/16, IAGCI met on two occasions. The first of these meetings was in April 2015, before I took up post. The second meeting, which I attended, was in December 2015. The Home Office Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) was represented at each meeting, and the independent reviewers also attended at the invitation of the Chair.

Published Reports

A full list of the Reports produced by the IAGCI in 2015/16 is at Appendix 2. The Reports are available on the Inspectorate's website, along with the Minutes of meetings held during the year. With effect from 2014, the Home Office changed the nature of its CoI products. Rather than covering all aspects of the conditions in a given country (e.g. the politics, security situation, economy etc.), the new products focus on specific topics based on their relevance to asylum claims. The IAGCI adjusted its commissions to be in line with this change.

Commissioned Reports

In February 2016, the IAGCI invited tenders for the following reviews, which will report in 2016/17:

- Nigeria: Background information including actors of protection and internal relocation
- Nigeria: Gender-based discrimination, harm, violence against women
- Iran: Background information including actors of protection and internal relocation
- Iran: Illegal Exit
- Ukraine: Fear of organised criminal gangs
- Ukraine: Victims of Trafficking.

The Inspection Plan 2016/17 – 2018/19 assumes that the IAGCI will commission 10-12 reviews in each business year, with the particular topics for review agreed during the year.

Further details, terms of reference, minutes and reports from the IAGCI can be found on the Inspectorate's website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>



Working with Others

Stakeholders

While the Inspectorate's reports and recommendations are aimed primarily at the Home Office, the latter's border and immigration functions involve and affect a wide range of other bodies and touch everyone living in or seeking to visit the UK. Therefore, in order to inform individual inspections and the overall inspection programme it is essential that the Inspectorate reaches out to 'stakeholders' to understand their many perspectives, interests and concerns.

As with its dealings with the Home Office, the Inspectorate aims to develop strong stakeholder relationships, based on trust and openness, while remaining strictly impartial and objective.

Forums

My predecessor created three groups to facilitate stakeholder engagement:

- Refugee and Asylum Forum

The Refugee and Asylum Forum (RAF) was created in 2009. Its membership consists of key asylum groups with an interest in and knowledge of the Home Office's performance in this area. In 2015/16, I chaired two meetings of the RAF. Again, I am grateful to all of the members of the RAF for helping me to understand the issues of importance to them, and particularly to Freedom from Torture and Asylum Aid who arranged visits for me to their premises as part of my induction programme.

- Aviation Stakeholder Forum

The Aviation Stakeholder Forum was created in 2011. Membership consists of UK airport and airline operators. During 2015/16, the Aviation Stakeholder Forum met twice, and I visited a number of airports. I am particularly grateful to London City Airport, and to the fixed-base operators at Luton Airport, for the briefings and interesting and instructive behind-the-scenes tours I received.

- Seaports Stakeholder Forum

The Seaports Stakeholder Forum was also created in 2011. Membership consists of UK seaports and shipping organisations. During 2015/16, the Seaports Stakeholder Forum met twice, and I visited Dover port (and Calais). My Plan for 2016/17 – 2018/19 recognises that the Inspectorate needs to take a closer look at seaports and maritime traffic than it has done hitherto, and I look forward to working with Forum members on this.

The Terms of Reference, Membership and Minutes of meetings for all three groups are available on the Inspectorate's website.

Outreach

Mindful of my newness, I accepted only three speaking invitations in 2015/16: from the Immigration Enforcement Leadership Conference, from the Border Force North Leadership Event, and from the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA) AGM. In each, I set out my early thoughts and initial vision for the Inspectorate.

My reasons for accepting the two Home Office invitations should be largely self-evident. The better that Home Office managers understand how the Inspectorate thinks and works, the easier it is to conduct inspections and the greater the likelihood that findings and recommendations will be accepted as fair and reasonable.

In accepting the invitation from ILPA, I also wanted to show my gratitude for the vital contribution ILPA makes to the Inspectorate's work, both in terms of the detailed evidence it routinely provides in respect of specific inspections and for its membership of the RAF and IAGCI.

In 2015/16, I appointed just one new member of staff. She was due to take up post at the beginning of April 2016 and her role, which is new, will be to engage the members of the three stakeholder groups in a more regular dialogue (this will be in addition to the group meetings and to seeking stakeholder views on specific inspections). She will also look to extend the Inspectorate's range of contacts in these and other relevant areas.

Inspectorates and other Bodies

In February 2015, the National Audit Office published a comparative study of the four criminal justice Her Majesty's Inspectorates (Constabulary, Prisons, Probation, and Crown Prosecution Service) and the Inspectorate of Borders and Immigration. The NAO report made nine recommendations, brigaded under three headings: *Maximising Impact*; *Sponsorship*; and *Carrying out Inspection Activity*.

A subsequent Public Accounts Committee (PAC) hearing, held in February 2015, was attended by the former Independent Chief Inspector, John Vine, by Mark Sedwill, Home Office Permanent Under Secretary (PUS), and others. The PAC's report contained six recommendations relating to independence, accountability, consistency of approach and collaboration.

The NAO and PAC reports and recommendations can be found on their respective websites. Not all of their recommendations applied to the Borders and Immigration Inspectorate. Of those that did, some were directed at the Home Office. For example, the recommendation made by PAC that it should '*bring reporting practice for the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration into line with the arrangements for other inspectorates*', meaning that reports would be published by the Inspectorate rather than by the Secretary of State (as had been the case until 2014). The PUS formally rejected this recommendation, but the Home Secretary stood by her commitment to publish reports within eight weeks of receipt. Eleven of the thirteen reports in 2015/16 were published within eight weeks, and a twelfth went over by just three days.

Recommendations relating to sponsorship arrangements were also directed primarily at the Home Office. At the beginning of 2015/16, I signed the formal Sponsorship Agreement with the PUS. However, the Director General International and Immigration Policy Group (IIPG) acted as my day-to-day senior sponsor, which created some difficulties with regard to resources since the Inspectorate's budget had been cut prior to my arrival in line with reductions to the IIPG budget.

Day-to-day senior sponsorship moved to the Second PUS, Olly Robbins, from September 2015 when the latter took responsibility for Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, UK Visas and Immigration, IIPG (and for HM Passport Office/General Register Office). While this does not address the NAO's or PAC's recommendations for separation of sponsor roles from policy or

operational responsibility for the inspected areas and for independent sponsorship (e.g. by Cabinet Office or Parliament), it has provided me with more regular opportunities to air issues and any concerns at Executive Management Board-level. I have found Olly to be actively encouraging and supportive regarding my inspection work.

In light of the NAO and PAC reports and recommendations regarding consistency of approach and collaboration, during 2015/16 I have met with three of the four criminal justice inspectorates (excluding HM Crown Prosecution Inspectorate) to discuss options for closer working, both on inspection topics where there is a shared interest and on the development of skills and best practice. I have also had meetings with other relevant inspecting and monitoring bodies, including the NAO, the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman, the Crown Services Monitor, and the Administrative Justice Forum.

In order to take this forward, from 2016/17 I have allocated 350 inspection days per year (equivalent to a 'standard' inspection) to *'Joint' Inspections - Collaborations with other Inspectorates and similar bodies (including short-term attachments, input to inspections and, where relevant, joint or complementary inspections)*.

With regard to maximising impact and measuring the Inspectorate's own performance, during 2015/16 I have had quarterly meetings with Home Office Internal Audit (who have monitored the implementation of my recommendations), and attended the Home Office Audit and Risk Committee (which it has been agreed I will now do annually). However, I have concluded that the Inspectorate needs to do more in this area, not least to ensure that the Home Office's responses to recommendations are meaningful and that promised actions are carried out. Therefore, with effect from 2016/17, the Inspectorate will conduct a number of re-inspections each year focused on accepted recommendations (see Outlook and Plans 2016/17 – 2018/19).

In June, I met Stephen Shaw, who had been commissioned to conduct a review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons. By this stage, Stephen's review was well-advanced and I was still quite new in post, so I gained much more from the meeting than Stephen did. Notwithstanding that the inspection of detention facilities falls outside my remit, the treatment of vulnerable individuals within the border and immigration systems, including where they are detained, is of interest and will form a key part of my programme over the next three years.

Since December 2014, the Inspectorate has shared its accommodation with the office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland. This collocation has meant that Kevin and I have had the opportunity to talk regularly and to discuss where our interests overlap. The Inspectorate has already paid attention to potential victims of trafficking (PVoT) in a number of its reports, but Kevin and I have agreed to make this the focus of a substantial piece of work in 2016/17, which we will tackle jointly.

Home Affairs Select Committee

In December 2015, I made my first appearance before the Home Affairs Select Committee. A full transcript of my evidence can be found at www.parliament.uk



Resources and Planning

Budget and Staffing 2015/16

The Inspectorate's budget is determined by the Home Secretary, and delegated to the Independent Chief Inspector under a formal letter of delegation from the Permanent Under Secretary as Departmental Accounting Officer.

In 2015/16, the Home Office imposed cuts on the Inspectorate's budget after John Vine's departure and before my arrival. The budget was reduced by £178,604 (8.4%)³ and the headcount from 29.89 full-time equivalents (FTE) to 25.89 FTEs. This was done despite John stating in his valedictory Annual Report that a headcount of 30 FTEs 'represents the minimum required to effectively inspect the large and diverse nature of the Home Office's immigration operations', a view with which I concur.

The Home Office eventually agreed in-year to return the headcount to 29.89 FTEs, but the budget remained cut, making the agreed headcount unaffordable. To stay within budget, my only option was not to recruit to fill vacancies as these occurred. Consequently, during 2015/16 the ICI operated with an average of 26 FTEs, ending the year with 25 FTEs.

Because of the more efficient inspection process introduced from October 2015, the impact of these cuts and constraints in terms of year-on-year outputs was minimised, but it was an unwelcome distraction and affected my plans to develop the Inspectorate's capacity and capabilities.

Diversity

All of the Inspectorate staff in post throughout 2015/16 were permanent Home Office civil servants.

A recruitment campaign run in 2014/15 resulted in four new inspectors joining the Inspectorate during March and April 2015. The budgetary restrictions meant that only one new member of staff has been recruited since my arrival on 1 May, and because of the department's protracted recruitment processes, it took until early April 2016 to bring them into the Inspectorate.

As at March 2016, the ICI profile was:

- 56% male, 44% female
- 32% BME
- 8% under 35, 24% over 50
- 8% working non-standard hours
- 16% homeworkers.

³ During 2015/16, with agreement, the Inspectorate's accommodation budget was moved back into the Home Office to fall into line with the practice for HMIC (which is also housed in Globe House). The figures quoted here exclude accommodation.

Training and Development

Through 2015/16, Inspectorate staff continued to take up training and development opportunities offered by Civil Service Learning and others, including Westminster Explained who provided core skills training in Analysis, Interviewing, Presentation Skills and Report Writing. A second cohort of inspectors began the Level 7 (Postgraduate) qualification 'Certificate in Professional Consulting' (identified in 2014/15 as the best 'fit' in the absence of an accredited training course dedicated to inspection). By the end of March 2016, 95% of the inspectors in post had completed or were about to complete the course.

The new inspection process, introduced in October 2015, will provide new inspectors with a training and development plan that takes them through from induction to fully-trained inspector within 1 year, during which time they will have experienced each stage of the inspection process, in the correct order and with the appropriate support and supervision. From October 2015, the priority was to offer those inspectors who had been in the Inspectorate for more than a year the opportunity to complete their training and to develop the experience of those who had joined at the end of 2014/15.

Values

The Inspectorate adheres to the Civil Service values:

- integrity
- honesty
- objectivity
- impartiality.



Outlook and Plans 2016/17 – 2018/19

Resources

The Home Office confirmed the Inspectorate's budget and headcount for 2016/17 at the end of March 2016. The budget is £2.08m, of which £1.83m is allocated to salaries. Subject to affordability, the permitted headcount is 30 FTEs, including the Independent Chief Inspector's post.

With 30 FTEs the Inspectorate will have a 'bank' of c.5,600 'working' days available for inspection work (based on 220 working days per FTE, minus an average of 10 days each for training and personal development, and days allocated to essential corporate functions). This is equivalent to 85% of total staff time.

For planning purposes, the new inspection process, introduced with effect from October 2015, allocates 350 working days to a 'standard' inspection (the elapsed time from the start of the inspection to delivery of the finished report to the Home Secretary is 100 days/20 weeks). A 'short' inspection is allocated 200 working days (elapsed time 12-16 weeks).

A rolling three-year Inspection Plan

In previous years, the Chief Inspector has published an annual Plan that, typically, has identified a certain number of 'announced' inspections and made a commitment to completing a further number of 'unannounced' inspections. The latter provided a degree of flexibility to deal with topics that might become of interest during the year.

Instead, my appointment having been confirmed until April 2020, I have produced a three-year Plan, the aim of which is to provide a better sense of the overall shape and range of the Inspectorate's work programme, how the planned inspections fit together thematically, and when particular topics will be examined. It reflects my predecessor's valedictory observations, and my own priorities after almost a year in post, plus the inputs I have had from the Home Office and from a wide spread of stakeholders, for which I am grateful.

The Plan is based on certain assumptions, a key one being that the resources available to me remain broadly constant throughout the period. Even with a fully staffed Inspectorate (of 30 FTEs), and with the new more efficient and significantly shorter process from starting an inspection to delivering the completed report to the Home Secretary, it represents a challenge. As it stands, it has already required me to make difficult choices about priorities and the span of work in each year, but it is hard to see what might be dropped or delayed.

Flexibility remains important, not least because of the extent and pace of change in this area, and the legislation that created the Inspectorate allows me to deviate from my published Plan where necessary. So, while I expect to complete Year 1 (2016/17) of the Plan largely as it is set out, I intend to revisit Years 2 and 3 at the end of 2016/17 and will adjust them if this is required.

While the new inspection process is shorter, the Inspectorate's methodology is still to gather and test a sufficient body of evidence, including through a structured review of case files, to support our findings and recommendations for improvement, and this cannot be rushed.

Under the new process, ‘standard’ inspections will take 20 weeks to complete, although some inspections will be shorter. The Home Secretary has committed to lay my inspection reports before Parliament within eight weeks of receiving them. The relevance of this to the Plan is that while the listed inspections may report or begin within a particular business year, completion and publication may carry over into the next business year.

The Plan includes a new type of inspection. In order to provide independent assurance that improvements the Home Office has undertaken to make have indeed been made, with effect from 2016/17 I intend each year to carry out a number of re-inspections of accepted recommendations from previous reports. This will also enable me to gauge whether inspections are having the necessary impact and will help to improve the Inspectorate’s own efficiency and effectiveness. As with all inspections, these re-inspections will be evidence-based, and I have allocated 50 working days to each (elapsed time 6 weeks) to allow for the gathering and testing of evidence.

Finally, subject to the revised process, which will take effect from April 2016, the Country of Origin reviews (commissioned by the IAGCI) are likely to require around 10 working days each from the Inspectorate.

Inspection Plan 2016/17 – 2018/19

Theme 1: Protecting the border (identifying and intercepting risks and threats)				
Area	Topic	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Intelligence	Intelligence – an inspection of the collection and use of intelligence by Border Force and Immigration Enforcement started in October 2015, due to report to the Home Secretary in May 2016			
Customs controls	Postal hubs – an inspection of customs controls at Coventry and Langley postal hubs started in March 2016, due to report to the Home Secretary in July 2016			
Visa applications (crossover with Theme 2)	Visa Post(s) (focusing on the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of UKVI’s visa operations) Note: to meet the ICI’s responsibilities as Independent Monitor for Entry Clearance Refusals without Right of Appeal, at least one Visa Post will be inspected each year	350	350	350
UK Seaports and coastline	Border Force operations at East Coast Ports (to include the possible displacement from Dover and the South East of illegal migrants and the effectiveness of customs controls)	350		
	West Coast Ports (to include people and goods entering the UK via the Common Travel Area)	350		
	South Coast Ports (to include Dover)			350
	The Border Force Cutter Fleet	200	*	*
	The National Maritime Intelligence Centre (NMIC) - a standing item in Ports and Cutter Fleet inspections	*	*	*
UK Airports	Immigration and customs controls of scheduled international flights	200	350	
Border security partnerships	Juxtaposed controls			350
Inspection days per year Theme 1		1100	1050	1050

Theme 2: Providing a service (processing applicants, claimants and customers)				
Area	Topic	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Immigration routes	Family reunion applications – an inspection focused on Istanbul, Pretoria, and Amman (the three posts with the most applications and most refusals) started in January 2016, due to report to the Home Secretary in June 2016			
	Asylum casework (last inspected in 2015/16)		350	
	Points Based System (PBS) visa applications – a standing item in all Visa Post inspections, plus an inspection focusing on treatment of a particular Tier(s) across the system in Year 3	*	*	350
	Administrative Reviews – follow-up to the 2015/16 inspection of Administrative Reviews commissioned by the Home Secretary, report sent to the Home Secretary in April 2016	200		
Routes to citizenship	Nationality casework (last inspected in 2014) – to be included in Year 3, resources permitting			
Identification and treatment of vulnerable individuals	Children – across the border and immigration systems (including the exercise of S. 55 safeguarding duties) – treatment of children to be included as a standing item in all relevant inspections from Year 2	350	*	*
	Potential Victims of Trafficking (PVoT) - across the border and immigration systems – in collaboration with the Office of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner	350		
	Immigration detainees, including the handling of further submissions and the provision of bail accommodation – aligned with HM Inspectorate of Prisons’ inspection programme, where possible		350	
	Vulnerable adults, including identification and treatment of victims of torture – a standing item in all relevant inspections, plus under Theme 5 a follow-up inspection of the 2015/16 Asylum Casework report (specifically Recommendation 4 regarding Rule 35 and Medico Legal Reviews), plus an inspection in Year 3 focused on the Domestic Workers visa route	*	*	200
	Women (gender bias) – a standing item in all inspections, plus an inspection in Year 3 focusing on the findings identified in Years 1 and 2	*	*	200
	Particular social groups – a standing item where relevant, and forming part of the Asylum casework inspection in Year 2	*	*	*
Service levels	Service standards (and internal targets) – a standing item in all inspections	*	*	*
	Charging for services - covered in relevant inspections, plus a system-wide inspection of in Year 3	*	*	200
	Complaints handling - a standing item in all inspections	*	*	*
Syrian refugee programme	Planning and implementation		350	
Inspection days per year Theme 2		900	1050	950

Theme 3: Compliance management and enforcement				
Area	Topic	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Clandestine entrants ('Clandestines')	'Lorry drops' – an inspection of Immigration Enforcement's response to 'lorry drops', including collaboration with police forces, started in October 2015 and will report to the Home Secretary in April 2016			
'Hostile environment'	Checking of immigration status within civil registration processes (excluding marriage and civil partnerships) – an inspection began in March 2016 and will report to the Home Secretary in August 2016			
	Driving licences – an inspection of the Immigration Act 2014 provisions to revoke driving licences held by illegal migrants began in January 2016 and will report to the Home Secretary in June 2016			
	Bank accounts – an inspection of the Immigration Act 2014 provisions to deny bank and building society accounts to illegal migrants began in January 2016 and will report to the Home Secretary in June 2016			
	Sham marriage and civil partnerships (last inspected in 2014)	350		
	Landlord immigration checks	200		
	National Health Service charging	200		
	Illegal working (last inspected in 2015)		350	
	Status reviews - revocation of leave to remain and deprivation of citizenship		200	
	Overview of 'hostile environment' measures – the HE is presented as a 'suite of measures', so ICI will inspect each in turn and also produce a summary to date at the end of 2016/17			200
	Contact management	Reporting arrangements, including Reporting Centres		
'Helplines' (and published guidance)				200
Removals	Failed right of abode applications and referrals for immigration enforcement action – an inspection began in February 2016 and will report to the Home Secretary in July 2016			
	Migration Removals Pool (MRP), Voluntary Returns, Family Returns, and Emergency Travel Documents (last inspected 2015)			350
Exit checks	Exploitation of exit check data across the border and immigration systems (including planning and implementation of Exit Check project), included as a standing item where relevant from Year 2	350	*	*
Sanctions and Penalties	Completeness, consistency of application, deterrent effect of sanctions and penalties (including, but not limited to, the 'hostile environment' measures above), a standing item where relevant	*	350	*
Inspection days per year Theme 3		1100	900	950

Theme 4: Working with others				
Area	Topic	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
'Hand-offs' between Home Office Directorates	Alignment of border and immigration processes and priorities – a standing item for all inspections, plus an inspection of any 'new' major processes at an early stage, plus an inspection of HM Passport Office and/or General Register Office in Year 2 where there functions overlap or join border and immigration functions	*	350	*
	Forecasting, planning, contingency planning - a standing item for all inspections, plus a re-inspection of the planning for (and management of) a summer 2016 asylum 'surge' under Theme 5	*	*	*
	'Onshoring' (to the UK) of immigration functions and remote decision-making			200
Partnerships	Other Government Departments (OGDs) and Local Authorities – alignment of priorities and responsibilities, information sharing, plus a comparison of similar functions e.g. DWP, HMRC processing of bulk data, contact management	200		
	Law Enforcement – information sharing and collaborative working between - an inspection of identification by the police, flagging to the Home Office and status checking, of arrested foreign nationals began in February 2016 and will report to the Home Secretary in July 2016			350
	Overseas partners and stakeholders – relationship management, information sharing, comparative performance			200
Commercial contracts	National/strategically significant (Home Office 'Tier 1') contracts – performance/delivery management, alignment with in-house border and immigration functions		350	
	Regional or Local ('Tiers 2 and 3') contracts – Home Office visibility, plus performance/delivery management	350		
	Overseas contracts, for example Visa Application Centres (VACs) – a standing item in all Visa Post inspections	*	*	*
'Joint' Inspections	Collaborations with other Inspectorates and similar bodies (including short-term attachments, input to inspections and, where relevant, joint or complementary inspections)	350	350	350
Inspection days per year Theme 4		900	1050	1100

Theme 5: Learning and improving				
Area	Topic	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Country of Origin information	Country of Origin (CoI) reviews – 10-12 reviews per year focused on the countries and issues featuring most commonly in Asylum claims (see ICI website) – reviews commissioned and quality assured by the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) on behalf of the ICI	100	100	100
	Production, usefulness and use made of CoI material within the Home Office – to include an assessment of the ICI's new process for delivering CoI reviews (to be introduced in Q1 2016/17)	350		

Litigation	Handling of litigation cases, including the work of Presenting Officers – inspection combined with Organisational learning below	350		
	Organisational learning from litigation cases, including Pre-Action Protocol (PAP) letters, Judicial Reviews, allowed appeals – included as a standing item in relevant inspections from Year 2		*	*
	Non-suspensive appeals – a standing item where relevant, plus a thematic inspection in Year 3	*	*	200
Staff	Type of staff (permanent, temporary, agency), grades/responsibility levels, provision of initial and refresher/top-up training, knowledge, experience, engagement – a standing item in all inspections, plus a thematic inspection in Year 3	*	*	200
Tools/Technology	Operating Mandates, Instructions, Guidance, Quality Assurance – clarity, accessibility, use etc. – a standing item in all inspections, plus a thematic inspection in Year 2	*	350	*
	Data/Management information, record keeping - a standing item in all inspections, plus a thematic inspection in Year 3	*	*	350
	Digital services at the border - a standing item in relevant inspections, plus a thematic inspection in Year 2	*	350	*
Re-inspection of ICI recommendations	Check on the implementation of accepted Recommendations, after c. 6+ months or earlier if the Home Office has committed to an earlier implementation date – 6 re-inspections per year with effect from 2016/17	300	300	300
Inspection days per year Theme 5		1100	1100	1150

Home Secretary Commissions				
Area	Topic	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Not known in advance	S. 50 of the UK Borders Act 2007 enables the Home Secretary to request the ICI to report in relation to a specified matter. Typically, there has been at least one such Home Secretary Commission per year.	350	350	350
Total inspection days per year		5450	5500	5550

Appendix 1

Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2015/16

Account	Pay/Cost Code	Spend
Pay Costs - Recurring	Pay & Allow Pay Remit	1,373,112
	Premia Payments	365
	Overtime	517
	Pay & Allowances Other	5,351
	Superannuation	259,775
	ERNIC	126,200
Pay Total		1,765,320
Other Costs & Services	Fees	⁴ 7,069
	Research	7,500
	Consultancy	1,500
	Other Costs	2,523
	Finance Costs	2
	File Storage	328
	Couriers	163
Legal Costs		3,506
IT & Comms		3,690
Estates		743
AT Conferences		4,015
Training & Recruitment		2,047 ⁵
AT Office Supplies & Services		90,699
AT Travel Subsistence		77,231
Non Pay Total		201,016
Resource Total		1,966,336
Grand Total		1,966,336

⁴ Expenditure on these three items consisted mainly of the costs of IAGCI commissions.

⁵ Actual spend on training for 2015/16 was £13,457; however £11,410 was accrued from an underspend in financial year 2014/15.

Appendix 2

Publications 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016

Inspection Reports

1. An inspection of the effectiveness of the monitoring of Tier 4 Sponsor licences – published July 2015
2. An inspection of Family Visitor visa applications – published July 2015
3. An inspection of Border Force operations at Heathrow Airport – published July 2015
4. A short-notice inspection of the Amman Visa Section – published October 2015
5. An unannounced inspection of the service provided by Solihull Premium Service Centre – published October 2015
6. An inspection of Settlement Casework – published November 2015
7. An inspection of how the Home Office tackles illegal working – published December 2015
8. An inspection of Removals – published December 2015
9. An inspection of General Aviation and General Maritime – published January 2016
10. An inspection of Asylum Casework (March – July 2015) – published February 2016
11. An inspection of the handling of Complaints and MPs' Correspondence (July – September 2015) – published March 2016
12. An inspection of Home Office Removals contracts and Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation – published March 2016
13. A short notice inspection of the Tier 4 Curtailment process – published March 2016

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information Reports

- Review of Country Information and Guidance – China: Christians – published April 2015
- Review of Country Information and Guidance – India: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – published April 2015
- Review of Country Information and Guidance – Pakistan: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – published April 2015
- Review of Country Information and Guidance – Uganda: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – published April 2015
- Report on Eritrea Country Information and Guidance – published May 2015
- Review of Country Information and Guidance – Iraq: Humanitarian situation in Baghdad, the South (including Babil) and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – published December 2015
- Review of Country Information and Guidance – Iraq: Security situation in Baghdad, southern Governorates and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – published December 2015
- Review of Country Information and Guidance – Libya: Minority Ethnic Groups – published December 2015
- Review of Country Information and Guidance – Syria: Security and Humanitarian situation – published December 2015
- Review of Country Information and Guidance – Eritrea – published December 2015

