



# **UK Border Agency's operations in the North West of England**

## **An Inspection of Nationality Group: The Management of Applications for British Citizenship**

March – May 2010



**John Vine CBE QPM**  
**Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency**



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**Write to us: Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Globe House  
89 Eccleston Square  
London, SW1V 1PN  
United Kingdom**

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# Foreword from John Vine CBE QPM



The work of the UK Border Agency's Nationality Group is different to that undertaken by other areas of the Agency. The Nationality Group deals with people who are typically at the very end of the immigration process and who are paying to apply for British citizenship. Successful applicants are granted citizenship and are eligible to apply for a British passport.

I found Nationality Group to be efficient in its operations and was particularly impressed with the level of personal service provided in maintaining contact with applicants. I was also pleased to find that performance was very credible, particularly in ensuring that the vast majority of applicants for nationality received a decision within 3 months.

Nationality Group did the simple things well and as a result was able to deliver a good service to their customers. I very much hope the UK Border Agency will now consider how Nationality Group's effective working practices can be shared with and applied to other areas of the Agency.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Vine .". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**John Vine CBE QPM**  
Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency

# 1. Executive Summary

1. In 2009/10 Nationality Group exceeded its key performance targets. These targets were realistic but also challenging and were clear, well understood and used effectively by managers to improve performance. Given the strong focus on meeting performance targets it is noteworthy that, unlike our findings in some other areas of the UK Border Agency, this did not result in unintended or perverse outcomes.
2. There were clear procedures in place with regard to data protection and the handling of personal information, which were understood and applied by staff in their work. We noted that Nationality Group changed couriers when they discovered that their previous supplier was destroying documents that were undeliverable.
3. Technology, such as the Casework Information Database, was used to increase the efficiency of Nationality Group operations.
4. The continual improvement of working practices was embedded within Nationality Group. Staff and managers at all levels were involved in the identification and elimination of areas of duplication, weakness and waste in relation to processes. Nationality Group understood and applied the principles of 'lessons learned' to support the drive for continuous improvement.
5. The Nationality Checking Service speeded up the decision making process and ensured that all the required evidence was submitted. It also highlighted the ability of Nationality Group to evaluate its services and improve them for the benefit of customers, external stakeholders and the UK Border Agency.
6. We found that Nationality Group was effective at evaluating the flow of work and re-allocating staff to where they were most needed. This reduced the impact of any delays on the customer.
7. Quality assurance was integral to the work of Nationality Group and was used to improve the consistency of the decisions made. Although Nationality Group ensured that a total of 2% of cases were quality assured each financial year, this 2% was not consistent over the whole period. We therefore considered that UK Border Agency should have a quality assurance target for each quarter.
8. Nationality Group communicated very well with its customers. In particular, the Contact Centre made it very easy for customers to contact Nationality Group.

## 2. Summary of Recommendations

### **We recommend that the UK Border Agency:**

1. Commissions a working group to report to the UK Border Agency Board on how the effective working practices identified in Nationality Group can be shared with and applied to other areas of the Agency.
2. Ensures that, when returning important documents (such as passports or certificates) to customers, it does not use any courier companies that routinely destroy undeliverable items.
3. Implements quarterly quality assurance targets.

## 3. The Inspection

- 3.1 The role of the Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency was established by the UK Borders Act 2007 to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the UK Border Agency. In 2009, the Independent Chief Inspector's remit was extended to include customs functions and contractors.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2 The Chief Inspector is independent of the UK Border Agency and reports directly to the Home Secretary.

### Purpose and Aim

- 3.3 This inspection of Nationality Group formed part of a wider inspection covering some of the UK Border Agency's operations in the North West of England. The terms of reference for this specific inspection were:
- To undertake a discrete inspection of the UK Border Agency's management of citizenship applications in Liverpool, collecting evidence to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the operation and compliance with relevant guidance and legislation.

### Scope

- 3.4 The scope of the inspection was to assess:
- How and whether Nationality Group was meeting its targets in relation to the volume and timeliness of deciding citizenship applications;
  - Any unintended consequences of those targets;
  - The consistency of approach across Nationality Group;
  - How Nationality Group ensured the quality of decisions; and
  - The ease of access for customers enquiring about progress on applications.

### Inspection Criteria

- 3.5 The inspection was carried out against a selection of the Independent Chief Inspector's Core Criteria<sup>2</sup> covering the following four themes:
- High level outcomes of the business;
  - Processes and procedures including quality of decision making and consistency of approach;
  - Impact on people subject to UK Border Agency services; and
  - Management and leadership.
- 3.6 The criteria used for this inspection can be found at Appendix 1.

### Methodology

- 3.7 On-site file sampling took place on 29 and 30 March 2010. On-site interviews and focus groups took place between 17 and 19 May 2010.

1 [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/11/pdfs/ukpga\\_20090011\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/11/pdfs/ukpga_20090011_en.pdf)

2 The Independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency's core criteria can be found at: [http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Criteria\\_for\\_core\\_programme.pdf](http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Criteria_for_core_programme.pdf)

3.8 A range of methods were used during the inspection, including:

- analysis of documentary evidence, management information and policy guidance provided by the UK Border Agency;
- file sampling of 95 cases;
- 8 interviews and 10 focus groups with UK Border Agency staff at all levels; and
- meetings and phone conversations with stakeholders.

3.9 On the final day of the on-site phase of the inspection, high level emerging findings were presented to senior managers responsible for Nationality Group.

3.10 The inspection identified three recommendations, as set out on Page 4 of this report.



## 4. Background

### UK Border Agency structure

- 4.1 At the time of the inspection, the UK Border Agency was structured into five primary segments – the four operational areas of Border Force, Immigration Group, International Group, and Criminality and Detention Group and the Corporate Services segment which includes the centralised management of Financial Management, Human Resources, Policy and Management Information. The majority of UK based staff work within either Immigration Group or Border Force.
- 4.2 The UK Border Agency presence in the North West of England consists of Border Force North<sup>3</sup> and Immigration Group North West<sup>4</sup>, which also contains a number of national functions that support operations across the UK Border Agency.

### Nationality Group

- 4.3 Nationality Group is a part of Immigration Group North West and its primary purpose is to manage applications for British citizenship. Even though it is based within the North West region, it manages citizenship applications for the entire UK Border Agency.
- 4.4 Approximately 450 people work within Nationality Group, situated in two sites in Liverpool. The inspection focused on the work of the following teams:
- **Managed Migration Support Team (MMST)** – operates at the beginning of the process and undertakes tasks such as the creation of new files, file tracking, updating electronic records, collection of fees and security checks.
  - **Nationality Casework Teams** – four casework teams operate during the day and one during the evening. They are responsible for deciding applications for British citizenship.
  - **Citizenship Ceremonies Support Team (CCST)** – supports the citizenship ceremonies process, including the printing and despatch of certificates.
  - **Contact Centre** – answers telephone and e-mail enquiries from customers.

### Application to become a British citizen

- 4.5 British nationality is a matter of law as set out in the British Nationality Act 1981<sup>5</sup>. Nationality is a legal process by which someone with no automatic claim to British citizenship can become a British citizen; it is also referred to as being ‘granted British citizenship’. A person who obtains British citizenship has the same rights and privileges as someone who was born a British citizen, including the right to:
- apply for a British passport;
  - live in the UK permanently; and
  - leave and re-enter the UK at any time.

<sup>3</sup> There are three Border Force regions – North, Central and South

<sup>4</sup> There are six Immigration Group regions – London & South East, Midlands & East, North West, Wales & South West, Scotland & Northern Ireland and North East, Yorkshire and the Humber.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/guidance/nationalityinstructions>

- 4.6 People can normally apply to become a British citizen if they have lived in the United Kingdom for five years or more, or are married to a British citizen and have lived in the UK for three years or more. More detailed information about eligibility can be found on the UK Border Agency website<sup>6</sup>.
- 4.7 A person must demonstrate a knowledge of language and life in the UK before being eligible to apply for citizenship. The 'Life in the UK test' consists of 24 multiple choice questions and is available at approximately 75 locations across the UK.<sup>7</sup>
- 4.8 Applications for citizenship can be submitted directly to Nationality Group in Liverpool, or via the Nationality Checking Service (NCS), a checking service run by local authorities. Application fees are set above the administrative cost of providing the service; this balances the costs of running the UK immigration system against the costs met by the UK taxpayer. So the administrative cost of a single application is £208 but the chargeable cost to the applicant is £735. For a joint application the administrative cost is £231 and the chargeable cost is £930. Fees include £80 for the citizenship ceremony and are scheduled to rise in November 2010.<sup>8</sup>
- 4.9 All successful adult applicants are required to attend a citizenship ceremony, which are conducted by Local Authority registrars on behalf of the UK Border Agency. At the ceremony, the successful applicant is provided with a certificate of naturalisation as a British citizen. This certificate is required if the person wishes to apply for a British passport.
- 4.10 In the UK, 197,955 people were granted British citizenship in the 12 months to 30 June 2010. This represented an increase of 13% compared to the previous 12 months to 30 June 2009.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.11 Below in Figure 1 is an overview of the process that is followed when a customer makes an application for British citizenship.

6 Information leaflet BN7: Naturalisation as a British citizen

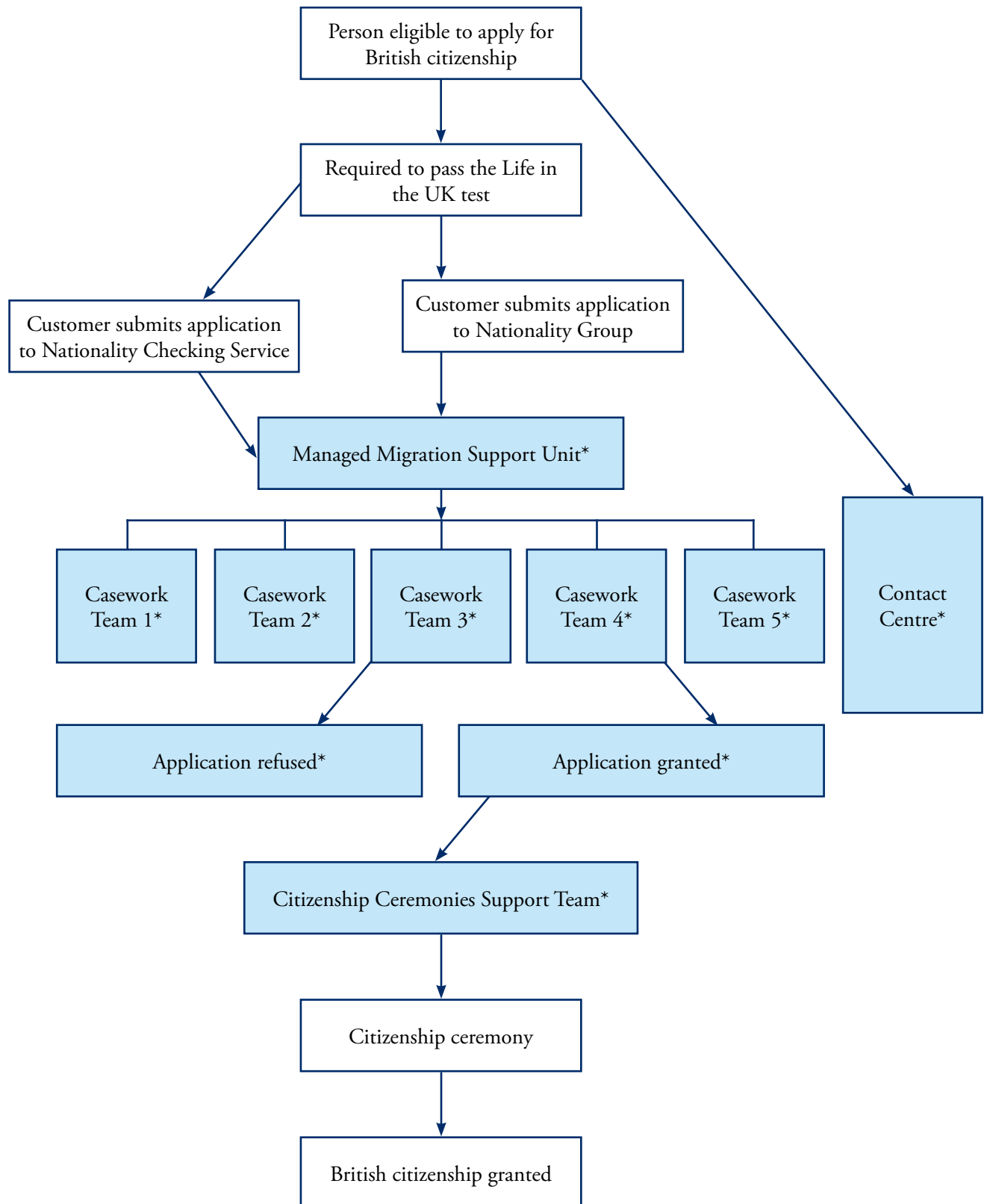
[www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/britishcitizenship/eligibility/naturalisation](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/britishcitizenship/eligibility/naturalisation)

7 More information on the Life in the UK test is available at <http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk/>

8 Current fees are available at <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/britishcitizenship/applying/cost/>

9 Home Office Research, Development and Statistics document 'Control of Immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary April – June 2010' <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/immiq210.pdf>

**Figure 1: British citizenship process**



\*Blue boxes indicate processes undertaken by the UK Border Agency's Nationality Group

## 5. Inspection findings – High level outcomes of the business

### General criterion:

The borders are secured and immigration is controlled for the benefit of the country.

### Specific criteria:

There are clear and realistic performance targets to drive improvement.

Performance targets were clear, well understood by staff and used effectively by managers to improve performance.

- 5.1 We found that the organisational culture of Nationality Group was focused on achieving targets. From speaking to staff of all grades we found very consistent evidence that not only was everyone fully aware of their individual targets but also how they contributed to the overall performance of Nationality Group. Some staff spoke of a “target driven culture”, but everyone we spoke to felt the targets were achievable and realistic.
- 5.2 Managers regularly distributed information on actual performance against targets and all the staff we spoke to were aware of how they were currently performing in relation to their targets. We found this had a motivating effect on staff, which was particularly noticeable amongst caseworkers who were very focussed on managing their workload to ensure they achieved their target of making ten decisions a day.
- 5.3 Given the strong focus on meeting performance targets, we did not find any evidence of unintended or perverse outcomes such as staff feeling pressured into placing quantity of decisions over quality of decisions.

**From the management information provided to us by Nationality Group, we found that the key performance targets were achieved and exceeded for the 2009/10 financial year.**

**Figure 2: Key Performance Indicators for the 2009/10 financial year**

	Target	Performance
Decision making		
Total number of decisions made	206, 368	209, 714
Decisions made within 3 months of receipt	90%	94.9%
Decisions made within 6 months of receipt	95%	98.9% <sup>10</sup>
Financial		
Revenue generated from applications	£81.5M	£102.9M <sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Up to January 2010, as decisions taken do not relate to applications made in the same period.

<sup>11</sup> £102, 887, 103 (source: UK Border Agency)

### Decision making targets

- 5.4 Nationality Group exceeded their targets in respect of the number and timeliness of decisions made. Nationality Group received almost 200,000 applications during the financial year and we found that almost 95% of applications were decided within three months. Nationality Group made decisions on applications quickly; customers therefore did not have to wait for long periods of time for the outcome.
- 5.5 Our file sampling supported the figures provided by Nationality Group. Of the 95 cases we looked at, all but one had been decided within the three month performance target. We found that in 95% (90) of the cases we looked at, the application for British citizenship was granted.
- 5.6 We found that performance targets were used effectively by caseworkers and managers to improve performance.
- **Caseworkers were motivated to achieve their targets.** Each caseworker was required to make 10 decisions a day, which was the foundation of the overall decision making target. At the time of our inspection in May 2010 we were told by managers that caseworkers were making an average of 10.2 decisions a day. Caseworkers told us they viewed the targets as achievable and fair, but were in no way complacent about them. For example, we found that caseworkers reviewed their entire allocation of files, established which ones needed additional information (and were therefore likely to take longer) and prioritised those first. This meant that information could be obtained without adding unnecessary delay to the decision making process.
  - **Managers used performance targets to drive improvement.** We found consistent evidence from both caseworkers and managers that managers were supportive of staff and used performance monitoring to develop staff **and** meet targets. Each caseworker's target was assessed at the end of each month and we found managers were realistic and sensitive to individual needs, as reasonable adjustments were made where appropriate. For example, we were told managers were able to give what were known locally as 'credits' if a caseworker had a particularly complex and time consuming case to deal with. If a caseworker was not meeting targets, we were told managers implemented structured action plans to improve performance. A caseworker who had received such an action plan told us he found the process supportive and that it improved his performance.

### Financial target

- 5.7 In the 2009/10 financial year, the performance of Nationality Group in respect of revenue generation was impressive. The target was £81,500,000; a total of £102,887,103 was raised. A senior manager told us the operating costs of Nationality Group for the same period were £7,900,000. The revenue went to the Treasury and not to Nationality Group.

### 2010/11 targets

- 5.8 We were told by a senior manager that the target for the 2010/11 financial year was to make 227,954 decisions and generate £121,500,000 in revenue. We found that these targets were calculated on the basis of the previous year's performance, as the 2009/10 performance was used as the benchmark. From our interviews with staff we found that setting targets in this way motivated staff at all levels in Nationality Group to continually improve performance and therefore provide a better service to the customer.
- 5.9 We also noted the additional challenge now faced by Nationality Group to achieve these targets. The budget for the 2010/11 financial year did not contain any provision for overtime payments to staff, whereas overtime was used by managers in the 2009/10 financial year to enable staff to make more decisions. A senior manager told us that Nationality Group would 'have to rely on business improvement initiatives<sup>12</sup> to do more for less' in order to meet the new targets.

<sup>12</sup> £102, 887, 103 (source: UK Border Agency)

**Specific criteria:**

There are clear procedures for handling data, including identity management, in accordance with national security and data protection requirements.

Clear procedures were in place with regard to data protection or the handling of personal information, which were understood and applied by staff in their work.

- 5.10 The UK Border Agency had in place guidance for staff, contained within Chapters 24 and 25 of the Immigration Directorate Instructions<sup>13</sup>. This guidance contained very clear information about the need for integrity in the field of information disclosure. It listed and explained the relevant legislation, in particular the Data Protection Act 1988.
- 5.11 The guidance provided an overview of the UK Border Agency's obligations and policy on the disclosure of personal information and guidance on when information relating to individuals (such as passengers and applicants) could be disclosed to third parties. It explained the balance between the obligation the Agency and its employees had to protect customer information and the need to disclose and share personal information when it was necessary to do so.
- 5.12 All staff that we spoke to had received training in data protection. This was normally in the form of an e-learning course that explained to staff the requirements of the legislation and, most importantly, how it applied to individuals in their everyday work. We were told by managers that all staff in Nationality Group had completed this e-learning course.
- 5.13 Staff in the Contact Centre demonstrated an understanding of the Data Protection Act and also applied the requirements. As the interaction with customers or their representatives was telephone-based, staff were unable to verify the identity of who they were speaking to using documents such as a passport or national identity card. Staff told us that they had received additional training in how to identify callers, which included asking particular questions and undertaking checks. We found that if staff had any doubts regarding the identity of the caller, they discontinued the call. Also, if the caller was a representative of the applicant, (for example a legal representative), contact centre staff were very aware of the information they were able to disclose to the third party.
- 5.14 A member of staff who worked in the Contact Centre told us *"we are trained in, and have to comply with, the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1988 in our everyday duties."*

**When important documents were returned to customers Nationality Group used a courier service in order to minimise the risk of loss.**

- 5.15 Customers (who did not use the Nationality Checking Service and sent applications direct to Nationality Group) were required to submit very important documents, such as passports, birth and marriage certificates in support of their applications. We found that Nationality Group ensured these were returned safely.
- 5.16 Nationality Group had recently changed couriers in order to offer a more secure and assured service to its customers. The previous supplier of this service would, in certain circumstances, have destroyed any items that were undeliverable. These circumstances included occasions when they tried to deliver items outside of either normal business hours or when it was unlikely people would be at home. As it was not uncommon for customers to have changed addresses, or for items to be undeliverable, this inevitably caused customers considerable distress and inconvenience. As soon as Nationality Group were aware of the courier's actions they reviewed suppliers and the service they offered and appointed a new courier company for the purpose of returning documents. The new couriers did not destroy any undelivered documents, instead returning them to Nationality Group.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/guidance/IDIs/>

- 5.17 We did not inspect the use of courier firms elsewhere in the UK Border Agency. However, given that Nationality Group discovered that customers' documents were being destroyed, the Agency must ensure that other customers are not at risk of having their documents destroyed if mail is undeliverable.

#### We recommend that the UK Border Agency:

- Ensures that, when returning important documents (such as passports or certificates) to customers, it does not use any courier firm that routinely destroys undeliverable items.

#### Specific criteria:

Technology is utilised effectively to increase security and customer service.

Nationality Group was effective in using technology to increase the efficiency of its operations, with the outcome that the customer received a decision on their application within the stated timescales.

- 5.18 Nationality Group dealt with large numbers of applications – almost 200,000 applications were received in the 2009/10 financial year. A senior manager told us “*the Agency is wedded to paper*” and that Nationality Group could “*only achieve targets by not reading through lots of files*”. Consequently Nationality Group preferred to rely on technology to meet its performance targets. This meant staff did not have to spend as much time looking for information or completing administrative tasks. As a result, the decision-making process was sped up which improved the level of customer service Nationality Group offered.
- 5.19 Nationality Group made particularly effective use of the Casework Information Database (CID), a database that was used by almost the entire UK Border Agency to record casework information. On a previous inspection,<sup>14</sup> we found that information on CID was not always contained in the hard copy files, or vice versa, which limited the availability of potentially significant information to caseworkers. Within Nationality Group, however, we found very consistent use of CID and the associated hard copy file. Hard copy files were used, but wherever possible Nationality Group automated the process and reduced the size of their files. Nationality Group achieved this by using CID as the primary source for information related to the case. From our file sampling we did not find any evidence that important information was omitted from files – the key information was recorded, stored and shared extremely efficiently between staff who needed access to the case information.
- 5.20 Further examples of the efficient use of technology included:
- **Automated checklists** guided the caseworker through the decision making process from start to finish. They allowed the caseworker to complete the case minutes on the computer and also provided them with interactive prompts to lead them through the process. This helped to ensure consistency as well as improving the efficiency of the process. As the checklist also contained a concise summary of progress on a case, copies were also printed off and attached to hard copy file.
  - **‘Life in the UK’** tests were completed online by applicants in one of almost 100 test centres that were located throughout the UK, prior to submitting full applications. This online facility afforded the customer more flexibility and reduced bureaucracy. Results from the tests were sent by data transfer from the centres to Nationality Group.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Family Removals: A Thematic Inspection’ recommendation 10:

We recommend that the UK Border Agency ensures that a clear audit trail is maintained in every family case and clarifies the information that should be stored on the file and the Case Information Database

<http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Family-Removals-A-Thematic-Inspection.pdf>

### Contact Centre

- 5.21 The Nationality Contact Centre made effective use of the available technology to provide a good level of customer service. Staff told us that whilst the technology used in the Contact Centre was not of the highest specification available it was nonetheless sufficient for the required purpose. For example, managers did not have the facility to record calls for quality assurance purposes but instead listened in to a set number of calls per week.

### Nationality Intake Forecasting Tool

- 5.22 Nationality Group had developed the Nationality Intake Forecasting Tool (NIFT), a computer based tool that enabled them to predict the volumes of applications, and therefore the number of staff needed to decide those applications. We found that statistical techniques were used to forecast future intake based on past intake. This was combined with operational information that might also influence intake, such as an impending policy change that might cause people to apply earlier. Caseworker productivity and experience were also taken into account when forecasting the resources required.
- 5.23 We found that Nationality Group also monitored the success of the NIFT by comparing forecasts with actual intake, and that this was produced in a monthly variance report. We were told that *“historically NIFT has been reasonably accurate”* and if significant variations were found they were used to improve the accuracy of future forecasting.
- 5.24 The use of technology to enable such forecasting had a significant outcome for customers. Once again, Nationality Group were able to direct resources to the most needed areas of the business in order to ensure the decision making process was as efficient as possible. Whether the forecasts were 100% accurate or not was not the key issue – it was rather the effective use of technology to make reasonably informed decisions on how to better deploy resources in order to decide customer applications.

### General criterion:

Reviewing and evaluating information so that improvements can be made.

### Specific criteria:

The UK Border Agency evaluates the impact of its services and processes and seeks ways to improve them continuously.

There was considerable evidence that all staff were committed to the continual improvement of working practices. Nationality Group’s success in this area ensured that customers received a high level of service.

### Continuous improvement

- 5.25 We found consistent evidence that managers were committed to improving working practices in order to achieve and exceed performance targets. In the 2010/11 financial year managers were not, unlike in previous years, able to use overtime in order to meet targets. This therefore meant that targets had to be met with fewer resources. The impact of not meeting targets would be felt by customers who would experience delay in their applications. As a senior manager told us *“needs must here, we have to make process improvements to improve productivity, we know we have to do more with less”*. However, it was not solely due to the restrictions on the use of overtime – we were satisfied that the focus on continually improving performance was ingrained in the work culture of all Nationality Group staff.
- 5.26 The ‘Kaizen<sup>15</sup>’ process for continual improvement was embedded within Nationality Group. The principles of Kaizen focussed on involvement of staff at every level with the intention of identifying and eliminating areas of duplication, weakness and waste in relation to processes. A manager told us that by using Kaizen problems were *“deconstructed and rebuilt from basic principles”*.

<sup>15</sup> Japanese for ‘improvement’ or ‘change for the better’.



- 5.27 Within Nationality Group we found that in practice this was more than a theoretical management tool – it was a process in which all staff felt able to participate and brought about positive change. A senior manager told us that *“pretty much all the processes had been tweaked”* using Kaizen. Importantly, when ideas were submitted by staff, we found evidence that staff received feedback on their ideas.
- 5.28 Senior managers led the commitment to improvement and were consistently praised by staff. Staff told us that they felt managers were accessible, supportive and led by example. We were told that the senior manager on site would regularly spend a day with operational teams in order to understand the working processes and discuss where potential improvements might be made.
- 5.29 For example, a senior manager told us that if there was a perceived workflow problem, a ‘Kaizen blitz’ would be conducted. This involved the creation of a working group of those staff involved in the problem area, who would *“unpick the process or problem, and then put it all back together again with the problem removed”*.
- 5.30 Examples of how Nationality Group used Kaizen to deliver what they called ‘Business Improvement Initiatives’ included:
- An imminent pilot to scan all documents submitted with an application. It was to be trialled on a small number of cases, the benefits assessed and if successful, it would be rolled out across Nationality Group.
  - The amount of information recorded on hard copy files was considerably reduced. The innovative scheme was the idea of a relatively junior member of staff who observed that case information was being duplicated as it was stored both on hard copy files and electronic systems. Nationality Group consulted with external stakeholders, including the private company responsible for transporting Agency files within the UK and internal stakeholders such as File Management Unit, to assess the impact of the proposed changes. The outcome was that the information remained on the electronic system but was not replicated onto the hard copy file. As far less information was recorded on each hard copy file, it made the process more efficient.

### Lessons learned

- 5.31 Nationality Group understood and applied the principles of ‘lessons learned’ to support the drive for continuous improvement. This is an area we have previously reported on, for example we found that the UK Border Agency, in the field of complaints handling, was poor at sharing lessons learned and best practice<sup>16</sup>. It also had a tendency to manage the symptoms of problems rather than tackle the root cause. We did not find this to be the case in Nationality Group.
- 5.32 We found repeated evidence that good practice was shared internally through the simple act of effective communication. A manager told us *“communication is the key to our success – we need the buy in from our staff, so we communicate with them”*. This was confirmed in our interviews with staff who felt managers communicated openly and honestly with them. Of note was the fact that staff said that even when an apparently negative message was communicated to them (regarding the continuation of the unpopular desk-sharing policy following the move to new premises) that they still appreciated being kept informed.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Lessons to Learn: The UK Border Agency’s Handling of Complaints and MP’s Correspondence’  
[http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Lessons-to-learn\\_The-UK-Border-Agencys-handling-of-complaints-and-MPs-correspondence.pdf](http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Lessons-to-learn_The-UK-Border-Agencys-handling-of-complaints-and-MPs-correspondence.pdf)

5.33 Nationality Group's commitment to sharing best practice and lessons learned was evident in their work on Judicial Reviews. If a case went to Judicial Review and set a precedent, the lessons learned were recorded in the central database. Crucially, they were also shared internally with the on-site Nationality Policy Team and caseworkers. As the policy team were involved in the process they were able to update, amend or introduce new policy as a result of the precedent. Caseworkers were also encouraged to review the central database. This improved the decision making process, helped to ensure consistency and highlighted the continuous improvement of the process.

### Nationality Checking Service

**The Nationality Checking Service highlighted the ability of Nationality Group to evaluate its services and improve them for the benefit of customers, external stakeholders and the Agency.**

5.34 The Nationality Checking Service (NCS) was an optional service run by local authorities in which they checked applications for completeness and accuracy, and copied documents before submitting applications to Nationality Group. As of August 2010, 107 local authorities participated in the scheme and accounted for approximately half of the total applications received by Nationality Group. Local authorities were able to set their own fees for the service, in addition to the fee charged for the application by Nationality Group.

5.35 The partnership between Nationality Group and the local authorities was described as a “win – win situation” by a Nationality Group member of staff. We found that there were considerable benefits for all parties involved in the process, not least the customer:

- **The customer** had their application checked for accuracy before submission. Important documents, such as passports, birth certificates and marriage certificates were also copied and returned, avoiding the need to send them in the post;
- **The local authorities** were able to offer an additional service to their customers, and were also able to generate revenue from the provision of this service; and
- **Nationality Group** received checked applications that were ready for a decision, therefore reducing the amount of administration they had to do and speeding up the decision making process.

5.36 We found evidence of very good two-way communication between Nationality Group and the local authorities: both parties worked together to evaluate and improve the process for the benefit of the customer. We spoke to two local authorities, who “*felt involved and well supported in the process*” and had “*nothing but praise for the customer service of Nationality Group*”. Examples of Nationality Group's initiatives to evaluate and improve the NCS included:

- **A dedicated team** of Nationality Group staff to deal with any enquiries from local authorities participating in the NCS. A local authority employee told us, “*I always know who to call and I get an immediate response to my questions*”.
- **Training courses** including document checking to counter a key risk to the NCS. Nationality Group staff were provided with specific training on providing advice on suspected forged or counterfeit documents over the telephone. In the event that any doubt remained over the validity of a document, the local authority would send the original document to Nationality Group so it could be checked by Nationality Group staff. A local authority employee told us “*the training provided ... was very clear with very clear guidelines*”.
- **An annual national conference** which focussed on evaluating and improving aspects of the NCS. As a result of evaluation at the conference, the process for paying local authorities for the Citizenship ceremony was changed. Authorities were now paid once the ceremony had been completed. This was significant as the ceremony date was the date on which British citizenship was legally conferred, and previously Nationality Group did not always receive this information on time. By paying the local authority only on completion of the ceremony, the authorities were motivated to provide the information on time and therefore customers received their British citizenship with the minimum of delay.

- **A monthly newsletter** for local authorities, which kept them up to date with policy changes or improvements.
- **Open days** at the Nationality Group offices to improve local authorities' understanding of the entire process.

### **Resource management**

**Nationality Group regularly evaluated the flow of work and re-allocated staff to where they were most needed. This reduced the impact of any delays on the customer.**

- 5.37 For example, it became clear in early 2010 that applications were rising significantly. Staff told us that they perceived this rise was due to a combination of factors, namely an imminent rise in fees and concerns from customers that a potential change in Government would introduce a cap on applications. More staff were deployed to the beginning of the process so that case files could be prepared and acknowledgements sent to customers. This prompt action meant that a backlog of applications did not build up.
- 5.38 We were told that staff from other teams were trained in the file creation procedures (needed at the beginning of the process) in order to create a flexible resource that could be deployed by managers if applications rose. We also found evidence that staff were transferred from the Contact Centre to the Casework Teams (where the decision making occurred). One member of staff who had been transferred from the Contact Centre to casework duties told us *"we have to be flexible, it is the needs of the business"*. We were satisfied that the impact of moving staff was fully considered by managers, and that the focus remained on providing the customer with a decision on their application as quickly as possible. We found evidence that managers explained to staff the rationale behind any move.

## 6. Inspection findings – Processes and procedures including quality of decision making and consistency of approach

### General criterion:

UKBA staff make lawful and reasonable decisions and these are fair and consistent.

### Specific criteria:

Decisions are made clearly based on all of the evidence and in accordance with current statutory requirements, published policy, guidance and procedures.

Managers regularly review the quality of decisions and consistency across the UK Border Agency.

Decisions made were in line with current guidance and based on all available evidence. The decision making process was consistent and sufficiently quality assured.

Our inspection did not seek to make a judgement on the quality of the decision making in individual cases – instead we inspected the quality assurance processes that the UK Border Agency had in place.

### Consistency in casework

- 6.1 We considered the checklists used by caseworkers to be an example of best practice as they ensured a clear audit trail and consistency in the decision making process. From speaking to staff we found that the checklists guided them through the steps to be followed in the decision making process and ensured that the correct guidance was followed. From our file sampling we were pleased to find that the checklists were used consistently: in the 95 files we sampled 94 had a checklist attached, of those 94, 92 were fully completed and 86 were signed.
- 6.2 A manager described the checklists as “*a decision making tool with the purpose of ensuring consistency*”.
- 6.3 The checklists referred staff to the appropriate legislation or guidance that was contained within the online Knowledge Base<sup>17</sup>. Staff told us they routinely used Knowledge Base and found it to be helpful and up to date. We found it was regularly updated to include the latest guidance.
- 6.4 The checklists also ensured caseworkers considered all the available evidence. They made it clear what evidence needed to be considered by the caseworker and ensured that important information in the application was not overlooked. For example, the checklists ensured the caseworker:
- updated the electronic database;
  - recorded proof of residence details;
  - recorded any concerns about vulnerable minors;
  - recorded periods of absence and residence in the UK;
  - recorded passport details;
  - recorded payment details; and
  - had the checklist signed and authorised by the appropriate manager.

<sup>17</sup> UK Border Agency database of guidance and instructions.

**The Nationality Checking Service sped up the decision making process and ensured all the required evidence was submitted.**

- 6.5 Participating local authorities would check that all the required evidence was included in the application – this meant that Nationality Group received an application that was ready for a decision. The latest information provided by Nationality Group (presented in Figure 3 below) for the period April 1 2010 to August 2 2010 shows that NCS applications had a considerably higher accuracy rate and lower refusal rate. Accuracy means that the application was submitted with the correct information and fees. As a result, caseworkers did not have to spend time contacting customers for additional information and were able to concentrate on the decision making process. The refusal rate for NCS applications was also lower than for other cases, again because all the required information was submitted.
- 6.6 We found that Nationality Group regularly allocated NCS cases to less experienced members of staff. This developed their confidence in their decision making ability and is an example of good practice.

**Figure 3: Comparative accuracy of NCS applications<sup>18</sup>**

	NCS cases	Non NCS cases
Accuracy rate	96%	55%
Refusal Rate	2%	12%

- 6.7 We found that whilst councils checked the application form and ensured the correct documentation had been submitted, they had no involvement in the actual decision making process – this remained the sole preserve of the Nationality Group caseworkers.

**There was a clearly defined support network for caseworkers that supported the online guidance and ensured correct and consistent decisions were made.**

- 6.8 We found that staff had access to both formal and informal advice when dealing with complex or controversial cases, or when they simply needed a second opinion.
- 6.9 Formal networks included a prescribed level of decision making. This meant that a case of a certain type could only be decided by a person of a particular level of seniority, which varied depending on the complexity of the case. We found there was very clear guidance published (both internally for staff and also externally on the internet) on what level of seniority was required different categories of case. This ensured the most complex or sensitive cases were seen by more senior members of staff and provided the customer and caseworkers with greater confidence in the decision making process.
- 6.10 Informal networks included what managers termed the “*walk and talk consultation system*”. Staff consistently told us that this system was widely used and effective in supporting the decision making process. Caseworkers would consult with peers and managers when considering a case, which was also facilitated by the open plan arrangement of the office.

**Quality assurance was integral to the work of Nationality Group and was used to improve the consistency of the decisions made.**

<sup>18</sup> Management information provided by the UK Border Agency.

## Quality control

- 6.11 A senior manager told us “*everyone is responsible for quality*”. We found evidence from speaking to staff and managers of all grades that this was a genuinely held conviction throughout Nationality Group; they understood the need for quality assurance and fully accepted it as part of the process. Caseworkers told us they expected their work to be quality assured and that they did not view this with any trepidation. This was in no small part due to the fact that managers used the quality assurance process to focus on continual improvement. For example, we found that if managers identified decisions that did not meet the quality standards they provided feedback, used action planning and adjusted targets to enable caseworkers to meet the quality targets.
- 6.12 We found that a range of quality assurance checks were used to ensure the consistency of the decision making process. This included the following:
- **Initial checking** of applications received via the NCS, and also a preliminary check for completeness by the Managed Migration Support Team (MMST), who prepared case-files for caseworkers and ensured all the relevant documents were present.
  - **Dip sampling and random checks** by managers. Checks were also an automated part of the system and built into the database used by Nationality Group. Caseworkers told us that automated checks would regularly appear on screen telling them their case would be quality assured. We observed that this occurred after the caseworker had made the decision on the case so as to not influence behaviour.
  - **Quality assurance by Senior Caseworker.** All decisions that went before a Senior Caseworker were quality assured, which ensured the most complex decisions were thoroughly quality assured and consistent.
  - **Call screening in the Contact Centre.** Whilst call recording technology was not available, managers would ‘drop in’ on live calls and quality assure the service provided by staff.
- 6.13 We found that quality assurance checks were both proportional and focussed. This focussed quality assurance on the most needed areas and was an effective use of limited resources.
- **Proportional** – managers told us they had a target to quality assure 2% of decisions made by caseworkers, or a certain number of phone calls per contact centre employee. If the volume of decisions increased, so did the amount of quality assurance. This was supported by the management information provided by Nationality Group which showed that 2.38% of all decisions were quality assured during the 2009/10 financial year. This equated to 4,996 cases out of a total of almost 210,000.
  - **Focused** – staff told us that newer staff were subject to more quality assurance, as they were less experienced in the decision making process. New staff also worked to staggered targets that were reviewed weekly and increased as their experience grew. Staff who had been subjected to this quality assurance told us it was used supportively and appropriately by managers.

### **Nationality Group had a well developed system for capturing and applying management information related to quality assurance.**

- 6.14 Cases that were quality assured received a quality rating (QR) between one and three, namely:
- Quality rating 1 – correct decision and no process errors.
  - Quality rating 2 – correct decision but some process error.
  - Quality rating 3 – incorrect decision.

- 6.15 We were told that managers applied an internal target to ensure that 2% of cases were quality assured, and that no less than 98% of those cases received a quality rating of one or two. At least 91% were to have a quality rating of one, and at least 7% a quality rating of two. We were told that in cases where the quality assurance identified that an incorrect decision had been made, that decision was corrected **before** it was sent out to the customer. We were also told that the manager explained why the decision was incorrect to the caseworker in order to prevent the same mistake from happening in the future.

**Figure 4: Quality assurance data<sup>19</sup>**

	2009/10	01 April 2010 – 30 Jun 2010
Total files quality checked:	4996	1001
Quality checked files as % of total files:	2.38%	1.91%
Files receiving QR 1	4618 92.43%	835 83.42%
Files receiving QR 2	341 6.83%	144 14.38%
Total receiving QR 1 & 2	4959 99.26%	979 97.81%
Total rating QR 3:	37 0.74%	22 2.20%

- 6.16 Management information provided to us by Nationality Group showed that these targets were met in the 2009/10 financial year when 99.26% of cases that were quality assured received a quality rating of one or two. This equated to 4,959 of the 4,996 cases that were quality assured.
- 6.17 We noted that performance in the first quarter of the 2010/11 calendar year (covering the period 1 April to 30 June 2010) had dropped below the target set by Nationality Group. Only 1.91% (1001 cases) had been quality assured and 97.81% (979 cases) received a quality rating of one or two. This meant that of the 1,001 cases that were quality assured, 2.2% (22 cases) had been given an incorrect decision.
- 6.18 Whilst it would have been preferable to have found that the performance in terms of quality was consistent over any given time period, we have however noted that the target was per calendar year and that Nationality Group may still achieve their stated performance target over the duration of the financial year.

<sup>19</sup> Management information provided by the UK Border Agency.

- 6.19 Customers are entitled to receive a consistent quality of decision making from the UK Border Agency. Whilst we did not find any evidence that Nationality Group were allowing quality standards to temporarily drop, we believe there is potential for the annual quality assurance target to give rise to perverse outcomes. Quality should be consistent all year round and not give rise to the situation where low quality work can be ‘averaged out’ by higher quality work over the course of the year. For example, during peak periods it may be possible to allow quality to decrease in the knowledge that it will improve during less busy periods of work.

### We recommend that the UK Border Agency:

- Implements quarterly quality assurance targets.

- 6.20 Nationality Group told us that a higher degree of new staff were in post during the first quarter of the financial year, and that the lack of staff experience and the additional time spent on training may have accounted for the lower than target quality ratings.
- 6.21 Furthermore, caseworkers made recommendations for decisions to senior caseworkers. If a caseworker recommended that an incorrect decision be made but the senior caseworker identified the error and changed the decision, this was still recorded as having a quality rating of three. Therefore, even though the customer received the correct decision on their application, Nationality Group recorded it as an incorrect decision.

**We found that the quality assurance was conducted to a high standard and were pleased at the achievement of 99.76% correct decisions in the 2009/10 financial year.**

- 6.22 We noted the dip in performance during the first quarter of the 2010/11 financial year and expect that Nationality Group will make every effort to achieve their targets. Significantly, we did not find any evidence that having a 98% quality target in any way inferred there was an acceptance that 2% of decisions would be incorrect. Staff at all levels clearly demonstrated a commitment to achieving both quality and quantity targets and we were satisfied that a 98% target was reasonable and appropriate given the volume of decisions made by Nationality Group, particularly when cases involved such levels of discretion by caseworkers.

### The UK Border Agency’s Quality Assurance Framework

- 6.23 We noted that Nationality Group was awarded the highest three star Quality Assurance by the UK Border Agency’s own Performance and Change Unit a year early. Whilst this was an internal quality assurance marker, we were nonetheless of the opinion that this duly recognised the strong performance of Nationality Group in the area of quality assurance.
- 6.24 The three star rating obtained by Nationality Group in respect of its data quality was defined by the UK Border Agency in the following terms:
- “Quality control at all stages of the delivery chain, fitness for the purpose for which it was intended, stands up to external challenge, may have some limitations but these are transparent, and is suitable for public dissemination.”*
- 6.25 The Quality Assurance Framework was borne out of a Home Office Research, Development and Statistics review of the UK Border Agency’s data streams in 2008, which found that Agency data quality was less than robust. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Framework was to give the UK Border Agency Board confidence in the management information presented to it and to engender a culture of data quality improvement throughout the organisation.



### **Quality Improvement Principles from the UK Border Agency's Quality Assurance Framework.**

**Leadership involvement** – strong leadership, direction and support of quality improvement activities by senior management are key to performance improvement.

**Staff empowerment** – effective involvement of all people at all levels of the organisation to improving quality.

**Data informed practice** – successful quality improvement processes create feedback loops and use data to inform practice and measure results.

**Statistical tools** – for continuous improvement, tools and methods are needed that foster knowledge and understanding.

**Continuous improvement** – processes must be continually reviewed and improved. Small, incremental changes can have an impact; business areas can almost always find opportunities to make things better.

- 6.26 We found that the five Quality Improvement Principles were fully embedded within the working practices of Nationality Group. Senior managers were absolutely committed to quality assurance and provided strong leadership in that area. Staff were empowered and involved in the quality process. Management information and statistical tools were used appropriately and effectively. Managers had key information available and used it to guide decision making and improve working practices, and staff at all levels understood where they fitted in. Above all, continuous improvement was the guiding principle behind the activities of Nationality Group. All areas of work were continuously being reviewed and improved, in order to make more decisions and provide a more consistent and efficient service to customers.

## 7. Inspection findings – Impact on people subject to UK Border Agency services

### General criterion:

UK Border Agency staff ensure customers are clear about progress and outcomes of any application.

### Specific criteria:

Customers are kept informed about progress.

Customers know whom to contact in the UK Border Agency about their applications and can do so easily.

**Nationality Group communicated very well with its customers. In particular, the Contact Centre made it very easy for customers to contact Nationality Group.**

- 7.1 We found consistent evidence that there was very effective two-way communication between customers and Nationality Group staff during the entire application process. It was very refreshing to be told by a senior manager that *“we don’t see ourselves as faceless officials”*. From speaking to staff at all levels we were left with the impression that customers were treated as people and not simply as applications to be processed. Whilst the evidence for this was often subtle or intangible, we found staff made frequent reference to treating customers as people and understood the emotional impact their decisions could have on people.
- 7.2 During the inspection we did not conduct any customer surveys, nor did we speak to any customers. Our findings are drawn from our interviews with staff, an assessment of the information provided to customers, sight of letters written by customers and a customer survey undertaken by the UK Border Agency in February 2010, when they spoke to 122 Nationality Group customers who had used the Contact Centre. Figure 5 shows the Agency’s findings:

**Figure 5: Nationality Group customers who had used the contact centre<sup>20</sup>**

<b>Where did you obtain the Contact Centre number from?</b>	Internet	Application Form	Other UKBA Contact Centre	Other
	61	24	1	34
<b>Was the person you spoke to helpful, knowledgeable, professional and courteous?</b>	Yes	No		
	90	12		
<b>Overall how satisfied where you with the service you received?</b>	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied
	57	32	6	9

<sup>20</sup> A customer survey undertaken by the UK Border Agency in February 2010. A total of 202 Contact Centre customers were spoken to, of whom 122 were making an application to Nationality Group.

### The Contact Centre

- 7.3 The Contact Centre was operated efficiently and effectively, and provided a very good level of service to Nationality Group customers. Importantly, it was easy for customers to access the Contact Centre. Contact numbers were used consistently – the telephone number was printed on all correspondence issued by Nationality Group and was also easily available on the internet.<sup>21</sup> The email address and postal address were also widely available. This was supported by the UK Border Agency survey, which found that 51% of those surveyed obtained the contact centre details from the internet and a further 20% from the application form.
- 7.4 We also found evidence from our file sampling that caseworkers consistently provided their name and address when writing to customers. Nationality Group provided us with letters of praise from customers for the Contact Centre and were of the opinion that customers knew who they could contact and how. On previous inspections of the UK Border Agency, we have noted the difficulties faced by customers when trying to communicate the Agency, for example, names and contact details were not consistently provided on correspondence or it was not clear to customers how to contact the correct part of the Agency. We did not find evidence that customers of Nationality faced any such issues.
- 7.5 The Contact Centre was effective at managing calls. Contact Centre staff were able to answer most questions posed by customers due to the extensive knowledge base they possessed, which they obtained and kept up to date by shadowing caseworkers, being trained in casework procedures or being allowed time to read changes to guidance. A member of the Contact Centre team told us “*we only put calls through to the caseworkers as a last resort*”. This was not because they did not want to help the customer, but rather because of their expertise, they were able to answer most questions. They also understood the importance of ensuring the caseworkers were able to make decisions promptly and with the minimum of distraction.
- 7.6 From speaking to staff in the casework teams and the Contact Centre we found clear evidence that they understood the primary function of Nationality Group was to make consistent decisions as efficiently possible, with the ultimate beneficiary being the customer. Caseworkers told us they found the Contact Centre to be extremely supportive and efficient, and that without it they would not have been able to achieve their performance targets as they were able to concentrate their attention on making decisions.
- 7.7 The UK Border Agency customer survey found that 88% of those surveyed found the member of staff who took their call to be ‘helpful, knowledgeable, professional and courteous’. Furthermore, 79% of those surveyed were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service received from the Contact Centre.

### The Contact Centre operated to, and was successful in achieving, challenging targets.

- 7.8 During the 2009/10 financial year the average calls made per hour, per employee, were 13.1 against a target of 12 to 14 calls per hour. For the 2010/11 financial year, the target of 14 calls per hour, per employee was being met as of August 2010. The aim was for staff to spend no more than three minutes per call, although we told there was flexibility to take longer if required. The targets reflected the fact that the Contact Centre was not an advisory service and was not there to talk customers through the entire application process. This would have been an inefficient use of resources and not a viable function for the Contact Centre, especially as a detailed guide to the application process was available on the UK Border Agency’s external website.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/britishcitizenship/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/britishcitizenship/applying/applicationtypes/naturalisation/completingtheform/>

**Acknowledgement letters**

- 7.9 Our file sampling showed that applications were consistently acknowledged. Of the 95 files we looked at, 89 had a copy of the acknowledgement letter on file. From our sample, the average time to send an acknowledgment was seven days, with an acknowledgement sent to two thirds of customers within two weeks.
- 7.10 Sending an acknowledgement was a simple yet significant task – it provided reassurance to customers as they knew their application and accompanying documents had been safely received by Nationality Group.
- 7.11 We also found that the acknowledgement provided the customer with the number of the Contact Centre. Again, this was a simple step that allowed the customer to, should the need arise, contact Nationality Group to discuss their application. We have previously seen very inconsistent use of acknowledgement letters and provision of contact details in previous inspections of the UK Border Agency's operations and the effectiveness of Nationality Group in this respect is to be commended.

**Managing customer expectations**

- 7.12 We found that Contact Centre staff were routinely forewarned by Nationality Group colleagues of any significant issues that might effect customers. This therefore allowed the Contact Centre to pass on information to customers in order to manage their expectations. Examples of this included the rise in application fees or changes in guidance.
- 7.13 We were impressed by Nationality Group's use of straplines at the bottom of the acknowledgement letters, which were used effectively to communicate with customers. For example, at a time when applications peaked, the strapline was used to advise customers that applications might take longer than usual to process. This was a good example of using a novel method to communicate with customers and manage their expectations.

# Appendix 1

## Inspection Framework and Core Criteria

The criteria used in this inspection were taken from the Independent Chief Inspector's Core Criteria. They are shown below.

### Section 1 – High level outcomes of the business

1.1 General Criterion: The borders are secured and immigration is controlled for the benefit of the country. The specific criteria are:

- 1.1(a) There are clear and realistic performance targets to drive improvement
- 1.1(d) There are clear procedures for handling data, including identity management, in accordance with national security and data protection requirements
- 1.1(g) Technology is utilised effectively to increase security and customer service

1.3 General Criterion: Reviewing and evaluating information so that improvement can be made. The specific criterion is:

- 1.3(c) The UK Border Agency evaluates the impact of its services and processes and seeks ways to improve them continuously

### Section 2 – Processes and procedures including quality of decision making and consistency of approach

2.2 General Criterion: The UK Border Agency staff make lawful and reasonable decisions. The specific criterion is:

- 2.2(d) Decisions are made clearly based on all of the evidence and in accordance with current statutory requirements, published policy, guidance and procedures.

2.4 General Criterion: Decisions made are fair and consistent. The specific criterion is:

- 2.4(g) Managers regularly review the quality of decisions and consistency across the agency

### Section 3 – Impact on people subject to UK Border Agency services

3.4 General Criterion: UK Border agency staff ensure customers are clear about progress and outcomes of any application. The specific criteria are:

- 3.4(a) Customers are kept informed about progress
- 3.4(d) Customers know whom to contact in UKBA about their applications and can do so easily

## **Section 4 – Management and Leadership**

4.2 General Criterion: The UK Border Agency has a robust and comprehensive internal performance management framework which leads to improvements. The specific criterion is:

- 4.2(a) Decisions are made clearly based on all of the evidence and in accordance with current statutory requirements, published policy, guidance and procedures.

# Appendix 2

## Glossary

Term	Description
Agency	Refers to the UK Border Agency.
Border Force	The directorate within the UK Border Agency which is responsible for frontline operations at air, sea and rail ports.
British citizenship	A person who holds British citizenship has the right to apply for a British passport, live in the UK permanently and leave and re-enter the UK at any time.
Caseworker	An official, usually at Executive Officer level, responsible for processing applications for citizenship.
Casework Information Database (CID)	Electronic database widely used throughout the Agency to record casework information.
Casework Team	There are 5 casework teams in Nationality Group, consisting of caseworkers and senior caseworkers.
Citizenship ceremony	Ceremony at which a person is granted a certificate of Naturalisation.
Citizenship Ceremonies Support Team (CCST)	Team in Nationality Group that supports the administration of the citizenship ceremonies.
Contact Centre	The Agency runs a number of Contact Centres that provide a telephone and email information service to customers.
Data Protection Act 1998	The Data Protection Act requires anyone who handles personal information to comply with a number of important principles. It also gives individuals rights over their personal information.
E-learning	Computer based training course.
Hard copy file	Each application has a unique file that contains case paperwork.
Immigration Directorate Instructions (IDIs)	Guidance for Agency staff on the handling of applications.
Immigration Group	The directorate within the UK Border Agency which is responsible for asylum, enforcement and compliance and nationality.
Judicial Review (JR)	The means through which a person or people can ask a High Court Judge to review the lawfulness of public bodies' decisions.
Kaizen	A process for continual improvement, originating from the Japanese for 'improvement' or 'change for the better'.
Knowledge Base	UK Border Agency database of guidance and instructions.
Life in the UK test	A person must demonstrate a knowledge of language and life in the UK before being eligible to apply for citizenship. The 'Life in the UK' test consists of 24 multiple choice questions and is available at approximately 75 locations in the UK.

Term	Description
Managed Migration Support Team (MMST)	Team in Nationality Group that supports the administration of application process.
Nationality Checking Service (NCS)	An optional service provided by local authorities who, for a fee, check applications for completeness and accuracy before submitting them to Nationality Group.
Nationality Group	Part of Immigration Group, responsible for managing applications for British citizenship.
Naturalisation	A legal process as set out in the British Nationality Act 1981 by which someone with no automatic claim to British citizenship can become a British citizen.
Quality Assurance Framework	An internal quality assurance programme that is operated by the Agency.
Right of Abode	The right to live permanently in the United Kingdom without any immigration restrictions.
Senior Caseworker	An official, usually at Senior Executive Officer level, responsible for a team of Caseworkers.
United Kingdom Border Agency	Agency of the Home Office responsible for border control, enforcing immigration and customs regulations. It also considers applications for permission to enter and stay in the UK, including nationality and asylum.



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Lead Inspector: Jake McClure

Inspector: Ian Tyldesley

Inspection Officers: Steve Embrey-Jones  
Michelle Lacriarde

Analysts: Rachel Pennant  
Susanne Chan  
Ryan Dee

Inspection Support: Sandra White-Rennie





