



An Inspection of Home Office Outsourced Contracts for Escorted and Non-Escorted Removals and Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation

July – November 2015



David Bolt
Independent Chief Inspector of
Borders and Immigration

An Inspection of Home Office Outsourced Contracts for Escorted and Non-Escorted Removals and Cedars Pre- Departure Accommodation

July – November 2015

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

March 2016



© Crown copyright 2016

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

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

Print ISBN 9781474130332
Web ISBN 9781474130349
ID 16031601 03/16

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by the Williams Lea Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Our Purpose

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

All Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration inspection reports can be found at www.independent.gov.uk/icinspector

Email us: chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk

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



Contents

Foreword by David Bolt, Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.	2
1. Purpose and Scope	3
2. Key Findings	4
3. Summary of Recommendations	7
4. The Inspection	8
5. Operational Efficiency	10
6. Assurance and Monitoring	19
7. Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation	31
Appendix 1: Role and Remit of the Chief Inspector	34
Appendix 2: Inspection Framework and Core Criteria	35
Acknowledgements	36

Foreword by David Bolt, Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.

Foreword

The Home Office has outsourced a number of its borders and immigration functions to private contractors. The effectiveness and efficiency of such functions, and the Home Office's management of the relevant commercial contracts, fall within the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's statutory remit. As such, it is right that they should be subject to inspection in the same way and with the same rigour as borders and immigration functions delivered entirely from within the Home Office.

The public sector's use of private contractors is of abiding interest to many people. 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.

With these points in mind, this inspection examined three areas of Immigration Enforcement's (IE) business that had been outsourced, each contributing to the enforced removal from the UK of migrants with no right to remain. Two of these are 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 concerns Cedars, the Pre-Departure Accommodation (PDA) opened in 2011 for families with children under the age of 18 subject to enforced removal.

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 contractors' self-reporting on performance. The inspection found that this remained an issue.

All the contracts inspected pre-date 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 must learn from experience when agreeing the terms of any new contracts in this area, in particular with regard to performance standards, and must move more swiftly when delivery is not meeting operational needs.

The report makes eight recommendations. It was sent to the Home Secretary on 2 February 2016.

David Bolt

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration'

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness with which the Home Office managed contracts for the outsourced delivery of services. It focused on escorting services for immigration offenders removed from the UK, ticketing for escorted and unescorted enforced removals, and the family Pre-Departure Accommodation facility, known as Cedars, used to house families with children under the age of 18 who were subject to enforced removal. It also examined the re-procurement process for the escorting and travel services contracts that was underway at the time of the inspection.
- 1.2 It assessed whether:
 - contract terms were aligned to operational needs;
 - Home Office assurance and monitoring of contract delivery was effective;
 - the contractors were performing to the standards expected; and
 - lessons had been learned and were being applied as appropriate.
- 1.3 It involved:
 - a review of management information provided by the Home Office Commercial Directorate, Immigration Enforcement and the contractors;
 - sampling of 250 files and electronic caseworking records;
 - interviews with contractors, including managers and staff from Tascor (escorting), Carlson Wagonlit Travel (ticketing), G4S and Barnardo's (Cedars); and
 - on-site interviews with Home Office managers and staff.
- 1.4 Charter flights used for removals were out of the scope of this inspection, and while the inspection looked at comparative performance data for escorting for overseas removals and escorting within the UK, it did not examine in detail the management of the latter.
- 1.5 On 5 November 2015, the Inspectorate provided feedback on the high-level emerging findings from this inspection to the Home Office Commercial Directorate and Immigration Enforcement.

2. Key Findings

Escorting and Ticketing for Removals

- 2.1 In recent years the number of enforced removals had declined as the number of voluntary departures had risen. However, requests for tickets for enforced removals and for escorts had increased, due to the large number of cancelled and rescheduled removals. Home Office figures for October 2014 – March 2015 showed that on average 2.5 tickets were issued for each individual successfully removed.
- 2.2 The process of requesting and confirming tickets and, where required, arranging escorts was semi-automated. Home Office caseworkers used an Electronic Request Form (ERF) with the ticketing service provider, Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT), which was routed through the escorting services provider, Tascor, when escorts were required. They also had access to a Best Value Calculator (BVC), developed jointly with CWT, to check and consider travel options. However, the usefulness of the BVC was limited in the case of escorted removals, where there was often little choice of dates when escorts were available, or of seats, or of alternative routes.
- 2.3 Availability of escorts was a major constraint. Tascor had increased its staff numbers between November 2014 and August 2015, but had still fallen short (by 2.5%) of the figure in its Target Operating Model (TOM). Tascor was able to provide escorts on average 15 days later than the removal date requested by the Home Office caseworker.¹ While the ERF was submitted by the caseworker normally at least 10 days before the requested removal date, the information contained in it was limited, and more detailed information was submitted 72 hours before the scheduled departure. This put pressure on Tascor's planning and efficient deployment of resources.
- 2.4 Where caseworkers did not specify otherwise, CWT agents selected the cheapest fare available, which would normally mean a non-refundable ticket. Some operational units, such as the Family Returns team, regularly stipulated that they required refundable tickets because of the high risk of cancellations. Others did not, and the refund rate varied between 48% and 93% for different teams. The Returns Logistics Airline Ticketing Team (RLATT) highlighted the losses from non-refundable tickets in the training it provided to caseworkers, but some operational managers considered that the more expensive refundable tickets did not represent good value for money. Overall, there was little obvious agreement within the Home Office, or guidance to decision-makers, about how best to manage this issue.
- 2.5 The Home Office pursued enforced removal only when an individual without leave to remain in the UK had failed to depart voluntarily. It was therefore a contested process, which contributed to the high rate of cancelled removals. Individuals took different routes to avoid being removed, including legal challenges and non-compliance with the removals process. The Home Office regarded some of the reasons for failed removals to be 'out of [its] control'. While this might be true in individual cases at the point of removal, it was unclear what steps were being taken to identify lessons that might be applied by the Home Office and others to reduce 'out of control' failures. Based on file sampling, some cancellations also occurred due to administrative errors by caseworkers, because escorts were unavailable, or because changes were made to scheduled departures for other reasons, which indicated a need for both caseworkers and contractors to tighten up their processes.

¹ In January 2016, the Home Office informed the ICIBI that the average delay across the whole contract data set between the requested removal date and when escorts were scheduled was 13 days.

- 2.6 In FY 2014/15, the Home Office's recorded loss on unused tickets was £1.4m, equivalent to 4% of the gross spend on ticketing. However, in the same period caseworkers had not updated CID with removal outcomes in 6% of cases. Failure to record the removal outcomes meant there was no immediate way of knowing where refunds were due and where losses had been incurred, and it reduced the accuracy of the management information available to senior managers regarding the reasons for removal failures and where improvements were needed.
- 2.7 Cabinet Office-led initiatives post-July 2013 to improve the management of commercial contracts across the Civil Service had resulted in improvements within the Home Office, including formal senior oversight of major contracts, the recruitment of staff with commercial expertise and structural changes to improve contract monitoring by operational and commercial managers.
- 2.8 The Tascor contract had been designated strategically significant and was being monitored by the Home Office's Executive Management Board, ensuring that any performance or contractual issues were regularly reviewed at director level. Tascor and the Home Office had been involved in a series of disputes about the escorting contract almost from the outset, stemming from Tascor's view that there was a significant gap between the value of the contract and the cost of providing the contracted services. These disputes had been allowed to carry on for too long, affecting relationships and progress toward resolving performance issues. Tascor made a contractual claim in June 2013, which was formally rejected by the Home Office. A subsequent formal claim in 2014 was resolved in February 2015, and a Joint Business Plan (JBP) was created that sought to reduce Tascor's losses for the remainder of the contract, to revise the performance regime to make it less burdensome to Tascor (and more manageable for the Home Office) and to look for ways to improve removals performance. As a result, the relationship had improved and Tascor welcomed what it saw as a more strategic and outcome-focused approach by Home Office senior managers. However, the Home Office had yet to see the significant performance improvements it was looking for.
- 2.9 In 2013, the Home Office had commissioned an external review of its major contracts by Moore Stephens.² This had identified *inter alia* an over-reliance on contractor data and self-reporting on performance. The inspection found that this continued to be true of both the Tascor and Carlson Wagonlit contracts. The excessive number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) originally specified in the contracts – over 300 for the escorting contract and 47 for the travel contract – had not helped. Some of the KPIs themselves had been poorly conceived (lacking any means of measurement or monitoring), had omitted important deliverables (such as provision of escorts within a certain timeframe) and had been misunderstood by the relevant parties (for example, the required response time for ticket bookings). The contractors had found the performance reporting regimes onerous, as had the Home Office, and the former felt that some KPIs had not been aligned with operational needs. Overall, the KPIs had failed to incentivise the contractors to improve their performance.
- 2.10 Despite rationalising the KPI regimes, the activity levels meant it would not be efficient for the Home Office to seek to monitor 100% of transactions. Nonetheless, it was still too ready to accept the contractors' data and self-assessments without proper challenge, and in particular it needed to do more to analyse (and manage) the financial and operational impacts of delays in providing escorts and to validate that refunds on cancelled tickets were being pursued aggressively. The revised approach towards a more strategic, more outcome-focused way of managing the contracts was more productive, but the contractors still needed to be held to account (and penalised financially through 'service credits') for specific performance failings where these occurred.
- 2.11 The escorting and travel services contracts intersected at several points: Tascor was dependent on CWT for accurate and timely provision of tickets for escorts; CWT relied on Tascor at various stages in the ticketing and cancellation processes in order to meet their targets. Mechanisms for ensuring that dependencies were managed efficiently were not consistent, nor always enforced. The 'batching' of ticketing requests by Tascor, for example, and Tascor not notifying CWT of failed removals as promptly as possible added to the Home Office's costs (either directly or by reducing 'service credits').

² Moore Stephens is a major accountancy and business advisory company.

Despite these obvious dependencies, the original performance regimes of the two contracts had not been designed to encourage cooperation between contractors.

- 2.12 It appeared that Home Office managers had learned the key lessons from the existing escorting and travel services contracts and were applying them to the re-procurement exercise, which had begun in early 2015. For example, the work already done to revise the current performance regimes was informing the performance requirements for the new contract(s). Most importantly, the Home Office had involved operational staff in the re-procurement exercise to ensure that the new contract(s) prioritised operational needs and that potential bidders were presented with an accurate picture of the practical difficulties and constraints of the removals process.

Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation

- 2.13 As the only charity willing to work with the Home Office in the setting up of Cedars, Barnardo's played a vital role in the successful implementation of the then Government's commitment to ending child detention, while preserving the Home Office's ability to enforce family removals. Barnardo's had continued to exercise a major, if not controlling, influence over the running of Cedars. In doing so, it had been solely focused on its core purpose of supporting the most vulnerable children, by ensuring to the best of its abilities that the needs and emotional well-being of families accommodated at Cedars were met.
- 2.14 While Cedars answered a political and practical need, the facility had represented poor value for money from the outset, based on the number of families successfully removed from Cedars, the more so since 2014. The Home Office was slow to react, taking over a year to reach agreement with its service providers, G4S and Barnardo's, about operating cost reductions. Even with these savings, projected to be £1.5m in 2015/16 and more in future years, Cedars remained expensive. While the Home Office might require some form of Pre-Departure Accommodation to support enforced family removals, this requirement could be satisfied by a smaller facility operated at a lower cost, not least by compromising on the provision of 24/7 staffing unless there was a family in residence, which was not the case at Cedars for long periods.
- 2.15 Home Office senior managers claimed that Cedars had an important strategic function in that the fact of its existence motivated families to cooperate with the family returns process at an earlier stage and to depart the UK voluntarily. They claimed that the rise in voluntary departures was in part attributable to the deterrent effect of Cedars. Accepting that it would be mostly anecdotal, no evidence was produced to support this assertion.

3. Summary of Recommendations

The Home Office should:

1. In order to reduce the logistical difficulties and additional costs created by late changes to escorted removals, work with Tascor to improve the usefulness of the Electronic Request Form (ERF) for risk assessing escorted removals and allocating escorts, and consider what of the additional information provided at the 72 hour point could be provided earlier.
2. Regularly review by business area and/or removal category the percentage of, and reasons for, cancelled or failed removals, including those deemed 'out of [Home Office] control', and set a common threshold, and develop guidance for caseworkers, for when to request refundable tickets.
3. Put in place (and monitor) a process that ensures that where travel tickets have been purchased for an unescorted or escorted removal and the removal is cancelled or fails:
 - the caseworker updates the Case Information Database (CID) and alerts the travel services contractor at the earliest opportunity (so that the contractor can seek the maximum possible refund);
 - escorts deployed out of hours and at week-ends alert the travel services contractor at the earliest opportunity, and the escorting contractor confirms to the caseworker that this has been done.
4. Given the co-dependencies of the escorting and travel services contracts, consider re-designating the latter 'Tier 1' and reviewing both together at senior level, where relevant applying the lessons from Moore Stephens and other reviews to both.
5. Having relaxed the current performance regime and reduced Tascor's losses for the remainder of the current escorting contract, press Tascor to deliver as required in relation to the 'significant efficiency improvements' to the removals process envisaged in the Joint Business Plan.
6. Conduct a detailed analysis of the operational and financial impacts of delays between the date requested for a removal and the date when escorts are made available, using the results to improve the effectiveness of current processes and to inform future performance measures, including financial deductions ('service credits').
7. In designing the performance regime for the new escorting and travel services contract(s), ensure that:
 - KPIs focus on outcomes, striking a balance between operational delivery and costs (including refunds) and do not distort performance by an over-emphasis on certain activities (e.g. In-Country Escorting (ICE) movements);
 - the number of KPIs is manageable for all parties;
 - performance data can be monitored and validated independently (where necessary through Home Office direct access to contractors' systems and full data sharing); and
 - any deductions (e.g. 'service credits') and conditions (e.g. sliding scales, caps) are correctly applied and used to incentivise continuous improvement and, where appropriate, collaboration between contractors.
8. Conduct a fundamental review of the requirement for Pre-Departure Accommodation for families with children under the age of 18, with a view to providing facilities, including welfare and other essential support, that are appropriate in scale, nature and cost to the projected demand for and proven value of such accommodation.

4. The Inspection

Background

- 4.1 The Home Office has outsourced delivery of a number of goods and services to private contractors. Immigration Enforcement (IE), the Home Office directorate responsible for managing the departure from the UK of individuals and families without leave to remain, has been in receipt of a range of outsourced services. These have included: the management of its Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs), where immigration offenders are detained; electronic monitoring systems for immigration offenders on temporary release; the provision of escorting services required within the UK to manage the movement and holding of detainees; and escorting and ticketing for individuals and families subject to enforced removal from the UK.
- 4.2 The contract for escorting services was awarded to Reliance Secure Task Management Limited, for a service commencing in May 2011 for an initial period of four years, with the option to extend it for a further three years. The contract covered the escorting and transporting of detainees within the UK (known as In-Country Escorting (ICE)), the escorting of detainees from the UK to an overseas destination (Overseas Escorting (OSE)), and the management of detainees at short-term holding facilities at locations such as airports and the juxtaposed border control points at Calais and Coquelles. In 2012, Capita bought Reliance Secure Task Management from Reliance Security Group, taking over the escorting contract, and renaming the company providing these services Tascor.
- 4.3 In the Financial Year (FY) 2014/15 the cost of this contract was over £40m, roughly a third of which was accounted for by OSE. Between January 2014 and June 2015, Tascor dealt with an average of 8,600 ICE movement requests per month and an average of 460 requests per month for escorted removals to overseas destinations.
- 4.4 The travel services contract was awarded to Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) for a service commencing in May 2010 for an initial period of five years, with options to extend it for a further two years. The contract covered management of charter flights and ticketing provision for scheduled flights for migrants subject to enforced removal and escorts, where required, and the management of relationships with carriers to maintain and expand available routes.
- 4.5 The annual cost of this contract was approximately £30m, roughly half of which, in FY 2014/15, was the cost of scheduled flight tickets.
- 4.6 Annually, CWT processed approximately 21,000 booking requests from Home Office caseworkers for tickets for enforced removals. Some booking requests were for multiple travellers and/or more than one flight and might involve several transactions. CWT also managed flight rescheduling, cancellations and refunds. The volume of transactions processed varied from 5,000 to 8,000 per month.³
- 4.7 At the time of our inspection, the Home Office was in the process of re-procuring suppliers for the escorting and travel services provided by Tascor and CWT as both contracts were due to expire within two to three years.

³ CWT also arranged hotel bookings overseas where these were required as part of overseas removal, and non-air forms of transport where these were used for removal purposes. This inspection considered only ticketing for scheduled flights, and excluded other forms of transaction performed by CWT.

Methodology

- 4.8 The inspection used three of the Independent Chief Inspector's core inspection criteria, see Appendix 2.⁴
- 4.9 The inspection process involved:
- familiarisation visits to the Returns Logistics Airline Ticketing Team (RLATT) in Croydon, which was part of the Home Office Returns Directorate, and to Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation (PDA) in Pease Pottage, West Sussex;
 - examination of the contracts, escorting and ticket booking process descriptions, supplier and Home Office performance information, contract monitoring data and contract review meeting minutes ;
 - a file sample of 250 cases from 1 Jul 2014 – 30 June 2015, broken down as follows:⁵
 - 75 cases where tickets and escorts were required for enforced removals and the tickets were cancelled;
 - 50 cases where tickets and escorts were required for enforced removals and the tickets were used;
 - 75 cases where no escorts were required for enforced removals and the tickets were cancelled; and
 - 50 cases where no escorts were required for enforced removals and the tickets were used.
- 4.10 The on-site phase of the inspection took place between 7 and 23 October. We interviewed:
- Tascor staff in Heston;
 - CWT staff in Longford;
 - G4S and Barnardo's staff at Cedars PDA; and
 - Home Office staff at Cedars PDA, at Croydon, Heathrow and at 2 Marsham Street.

Figure 1: HO staff interviewed (by grade)

Senior Civil Servant	4
Grade 6	3
Grade 7	4
Senior Executive Officer	6
Higher Executive Officer	2
Total	19

⁴ The full set of inspection criteria can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's website at: <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/>

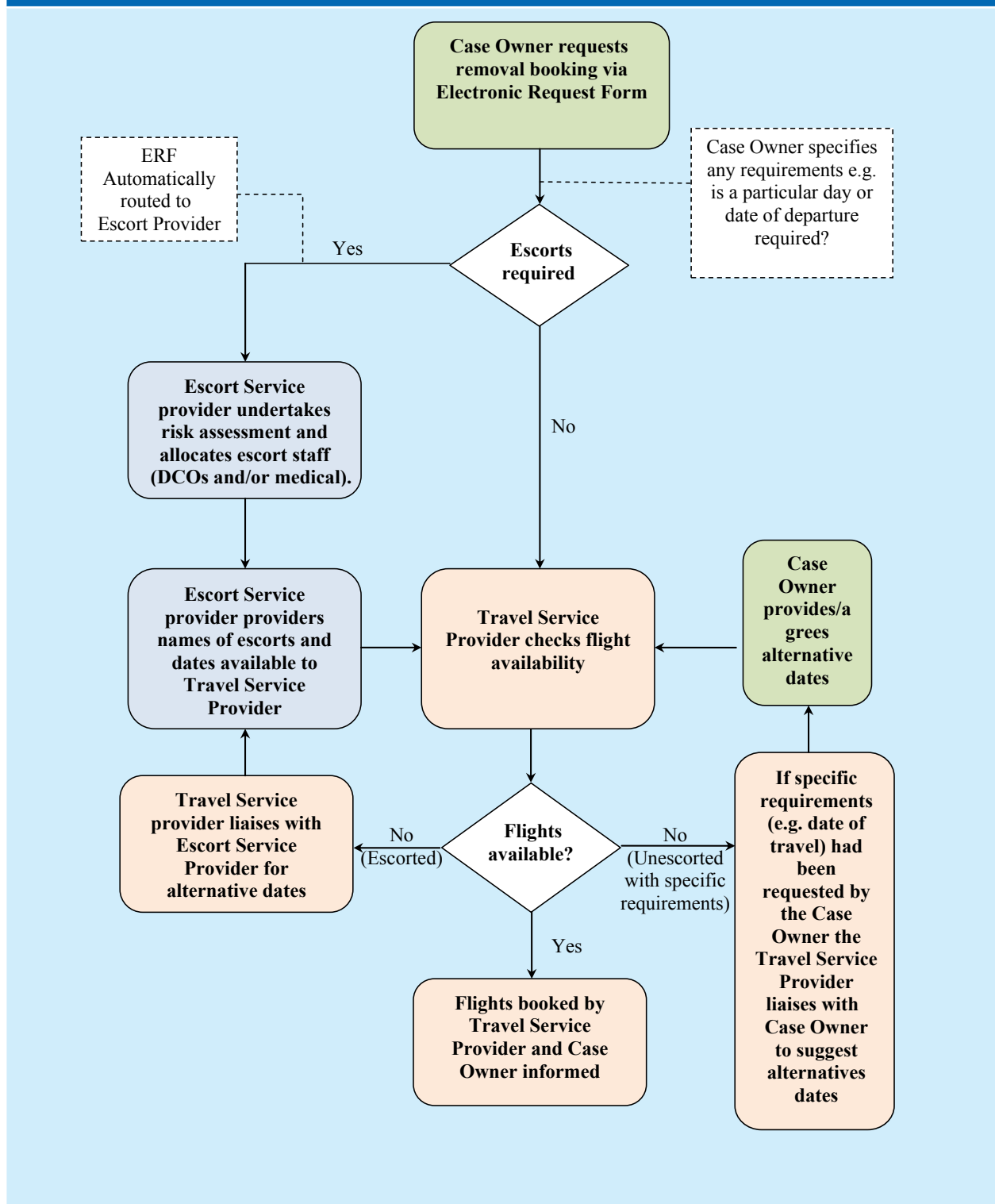
⁵ The breakdown was developed in consultation with Home Office Science.

5. Operational Efficiency

Enforced Removals Process - Background

- 5.1 The Home Office encourages those without the right to remain in the UK to depart voluntarily, and pursues enforced removal only where individuals or families refuse to do so, not least because of the high costs associated with enforced removals. Our 2015 report *An Inspection of Removals* examined this area of Home Office operations in detail. As noted in that report, while the number of voluntary departures had risen, the number of enforced removals had declined steadily for the past several years. In 2014, there were approximately 12,500 enforced removals. A similar number was expected in 2015.
- 5.2 Most migrants who are subject to enforced removal will be detained prior to departure in an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). Families with children under the age of 18 may be accommodated in Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation (PDA). Cedars is run by G4S as part of a larger contract for the Tinsley House IRC, with family support, social work and welfare services provided to resident families by Barnardo's, the UK children's charity.
- 5.3 Immigration Enforcement (IE) has responsibility for processing enforced removals. IE will judge whether a migrant requires to be escorted on the flight to their country of return; for example because of a risk that they may fail to fly if not escorted, or because they need to be accompanied for medical reasons. If required, escorts are provided by Tascor under Capita's escorting contract with the Home Office. Figure 2 is a Home Office-produced chart showing the high-level process for booking a ticket for an escorted or unescorted enforced removal.

Figure 2: High-level ticket booking process



5.4 Under the ticket booking process, the IE caseworker responsible for making the decision to enforce removal fills in an Electronic Removal Form (ERF) with the biographical details, route and required removal date, so that a ticket can be purchased. Requests for unescorted tickets are sent directly to Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT). If the caseworker requires an escorted removal they use the ERF to provide additional information to help Tascor to make a risk-based assessment of the number and type of escorts required and to allocate them. Tascor then provides the escorts' names and available travel dates to CWT.

- 5.5 Guidance on suitable routes and carriers is available in a Travel Information Guide (TIG), an electronic manual maintained jointly by CWT and the Home Office. The TIG contains information on preferred routes, carriers, transit points, and on restrictions imposed by particular carriers on individuals who were subject to enforced removal.
- 5.6 CWT enters the details of each booking, whether received directly or via Tascor, into a Best Value Calculator (BVC). This allows the ticketing agent to identify ticketing options, taking into account variables such as the cost of different ticket types, as well as representative detention and escort costs for different dates or routes.
- 5.7 Unless the Home Office caseworker has specified through the ERF that they required a refundable ticket, CWT provisionally books the cheapest option identified by the BVC and emails the caseworker with the details and a copy of the BVC output showing three options, including the cheapest. The caseworker has three hours to respond to CWT with any changes to the provisional booking, at which point CWT confirms the booking to secure the ticket at the stated price.
- 5.8 The Home Office caseworker is required to update the Home Office Case Information Database (CID) to confirm the outcome of each removal. Where the removal has failed, this includes the reasons for failure. In the event of a removal being cancelled the caseworker is required to inform CWT via the ERF so that a refund can be sought for the unused ticket(s).

Provision of Tickets

- 5.9 Home Office managers told us that, overall, CWT provided a quick and accurate ticketing service, with tickets issued within the timeframe specified in the contract and with few errors. In our file sample of 250 ticketing requests for escorted and unescorted removals the correct tickets were provided in every case within 24 hours. CWT managers commented that, despite a fall in the number of enforced removals, transaction volumes had increased over FY 2014/15 due to the number of cancelled and rescheduled flights.
- 5.10 Both Home Office and CWT managers noted that CWT's position as a major travel operator had enabled it to negotiate favourable deals with airlines and, over the life of the contract to increase the range of routes available for enforced removals. However, the reluctance of many carriers to take enforced removal passengers, or passengers with escorts, was a significant constraint and led to delays. On certain routes, and at busier times of year, it was not always possible to book the required tickets due to the limited availability of seats.
- 5.11 Home Office contract monitors told us that having centralised ticketing for enforced removals with one company, and by using the standardised ERF, consistency and accountability of the ticketing process had improved, while the TIG and the BVC provided caseworkers with the information they needed to make robust decisions about ticket types and removal dates.
- 5.12 Both Home Office and CWT staff said that the BVC was less useful for escorted removals. While the BVC factored in detention costs and the cost of the escorts, Tascor regularly offered just one date when escorts would be available for a particular removal and it was not unusual for there to be only one viable route. Nonetheless, ticketing agents were required to fill in the BVC. CWT managers thought the process should be changed so that the BVC need not be used when there were no options to compare.
- 5.13 Home Office and CWT staff also told us that late changes to tickets for escorts created additional work for CWT. The changes might be required because the escorts originally allocated were no longer available or because the risks had been reassessed and escort arrangements amended. Late changes could also mean additional costs for the Home Office, as altering tickets could incur administration fees from carriers and ticket prices could be considerably higher nearer the departure date.

- 5.14 CWT reported the number of escort name changes each month.⁶ The figures for FY 2014/15 were as follows:

Figure 3: Escort name changes for FY 2014/15

Month	Number of escort name changes
April 14	365
May 14	294
June 14	299
July 14	426
August 14	350
September 14	537
October 14	385
November 14	255
December 14	215
January 15	209
February 15	263
March 15	311
Total FY 2014/15	3909

- 5.15 Home Office managers told us there was an intention to address the additional costs incurred because of late name changes in the new escorting and travel contracts.
- 5.16 CWT managers told us that the pattern of work generated by ticketing for enforced removals presented them with particular challenges. The numbers of cancellations and refund transactions meant CWT staff spent a large proportion of their time undoing work they had just completed. CWT managers said that the number of cancelled removal attempts was the major constraint on their efficiency.
- 5.17 According to Home Office records, in FY 2014/15 40% of all planned removals were cancelled. Home Office figures from October 2014 – March 2015 showed that on average 2.5 tickets were issued for each individual successfully removed. The cancellation rate varied widely between different operational areas, with some, such as Family Removals, having a much higher than average rate. A cancellation was not in itself an indication that the individual had not left the UK, only that a particular ticket or set of tickets had not been used. This might be because a flight had been rescheduled, or because having entered into the enforced removal process an individual had decided to buy their own ticket rather than be removed at public expense and extend the period before they could apply to re-enter the UK.⁷ A number of different factors contributed to the overall cancellation rate, some of which the Home Office considered to be outside its control. The 136 cancelled escorted and unescorted removals in our file sample were cancelled for the following reasons;⁸ Figure 4 refers.

⁶ Figures from OSM Pack April 2015; data provided by CWT.

⁷ Migrants removed at public expense will generally be subject to longer bans on re-entry to the UK. An individual can decide to purchase a ticket at any stage in the removal process.

⁸ The total cancelled removal file sample included 150 cases, but of these, 4 in fact related to a successful removal, 1 had no auditable data on CID, and in 9 cases responsibility for cancellation was unclear.

Figure 4: Reasons for cancellation of sampled cases	
Home Office 'out of control'	
Late legal challenge or further representations	70
Disruptive or non-compliant behaviour	25
Tascor responsibility	6
Airline refusal to carry	3
Total 'out of control'	104 (76%)
Home Office 'in control'	
Earlier enforced removal	7
Departed voluntarily i.e. not at public expense	6
Other operational reason	3
Poor case management	5
Travel documentation not available	4
Insufficient notice of removal given	3
Appeal/application for leave outstanding	4
Total 'in control'	32 (24%)

- 5.18 Home Office operational managers told us that caseworkers needed further training to ensure that they were aware of the costs of cancelled removals. They also said that efforts were being made, through training and supervision, to reduce the number of cancellations due to caseworker error.
- 5.19 Cancellations due to non-compliance normally applied to unescorted removals. Home Office managers believed that it was important that the decision whether or not to use escorts remained with caseworkers, but the latter needed more support to ensure they made a considered judgement. Some managers saw a pattern of caseworkers booking unescorted removals where better assessments of the risk of non-compliance would have identified the need for escorted removals. Others told us that some caseworkers were risk-averse and would book an escorted removal at considerable extra cost where one was not needed.
- 5.20 Since April 2014, consolidated management information that aligned reasons for cancellation with the cost of the cancelled tickets had been available to operational areas. We were told by Home Office senior managers that from April 2015 quarterly meetings had been arranged at senior operational level to review this information, with a view to improving oversight of removals costs and performance.
- 5.21 Figure 5 gives the aggregated spend on tickets for FY 2014/15 for scheduled and charter flights, taken from the Returns Logistics Airline Ticketing Team (RLATT) Ticketing Performance Report for April 2014 to June 2015. Operational areas received this information monthly in a performance pack.

Figure 5: Spend and refunds on tickets, FY 2014/15	
Subject tickets	£13,235,040
Escort tickets	£21,276,091
Total ticket spend	£34,511,131
Confirmed removals spend	£12,063,329
Cancelled and 'unoutcomed' spend	£22,447,802
Refunded	£19,636,284
Potential loss	£3,075,572

- 5.22 Data in the performance pack indicated that, in 2014/15, 6% of cases were shown as 'unoutcomed', meaning the caseworker had not updated the record with the outcome of the removal attempt. Some will have related to removals that were set for a date beyond the end of FY 2014/15 and therefore the outcome could not yet be known. But, where the outcome was known but not recorded it was not possible to confirm whether the ticket(s) in question had been used, whether a refund was due, or what loss if any had been incurred. Home Office commercial managers told us that the final reported loss for FY 2014/15 was £1.41m, equivalent to 4% of the gross ticketing spend.
- 5.23 The level of refunds obtained against unused tickets varied widely between different operational areas. For example, performance pack data showed that the Family Returns Team had a ticket usage rate of 12% in FY 2014/15, with refunds obtained on 93% of cancelled tickets. Over the same period, the Third Country Unit had a ticket usage rate of 41%, and obtained refunds on 48% of cancelled or 'unoutcomed' tickets. Home Office monitors from RLATT told us that this was due to some teams making greater use of non-refundable tickets. RLATT suggested that variations in the percentage of refundable tickets booked were in part due to awareness of the risks of cancellation being uneven across operational areas.
- 5.24 The decision whether to purchase a fully refundable ticket rested with the caseworker who organised the removal. CWT staff to whom we spoke questioned whether the decision would be better resting with those with financial rather than operational responsibility, in order to ensure best value. However, senior Home Office managers considered that caseworkers were best able to evaluate the individual circumstances of each case and should continue to be responsible for such decisions. They did not believe it was possible to predict systematically which removals would be more likely to fail and would therefore justify the purchase of a more expensive refundable ticket.
- 5.25 RLATT told us that the BVC did not evaluate the risk of cancellation of any given removal. They therefore sought to reduce the use of non-refundable tickets for removals that were likely to fail through their training of caseworkers, as well as by highlighting patterns of usage to operational areas through the performance pack. However, the possibility of creating a tool that could assist caseworkers to evaluate the risk of cancellation for any particular removal was being considered for inclusion in the specification of the new escorting and travel services contracts.
- 5.26 CWT staff and Home Office contract monitors said that CWT was not always advised of cancelled removals at the earliest opportunity, and this affected whether CWT could obtain a refund from the carrier, the size of the refund, and any late cancellation fees. As removals routinely took place outside normal working hours, a caseworker might not be aware for some hours that a removal had failed, or for some days in the case of weekend departures. There was no process in place to ensure Home Office staff monitoring returnees' movements alerted CWT to failed removals as soon as possible. The Tascor contract required that escorts inform CWT if an escorted removal failed, but again there was nothing in place to ensure this was done as soon as possible, and the Home Office did not monitor compliance with this requirement.

Escort Provision

- 5.27 Home Office managers told us that non-availability of escorts was a significant factor in failed or delayed escorted removals. Tascor managers told us that higher numbers of requests for escorted removals than expected, and the large number of cancellations, made accurate planning and provision of escorts very difficult.
- 5.28 Tascor had difficulty recruiting and retaining escorts. In November 2014, Tascor's headcount showed a shortfall of 12% against the figure indicated in its Target Operating Model (TOM). By August 2015, recruitment had taken staff numbers to within 2.5% of the TOM target, and overseas escort numbers had risen to 250.⁹
- 5.29 Under the contract, Tascor was required to review Electronic Removal Forms (ERFs) containing escort requests and pass them back to CWT for ticketing within three hours. Tascor staff evaluated the information in the ERF to assess the level of risk and identify suitable escorts available on the requested removal date. The Home Office provided Tascor with additional information about the individual(s) to be removed 72 hours before departure. Typically, this included up-to-date information from the IRC where the individual(s) had been detained, including any medical issues. Tascor reviewed their risk assessment in light of this information and, if necessary, made changes to the escort allocation, for example, adding a medical escort if required, or changing the number of escorts if the individual(s) had had a history of non-compliance while in detention.
- 5.30 Tascor staff told us that the limited information provided in the ERF affected the quality of their initial risk assessment; earlier access to the more detailed information provided at the 72 hour point would enable them to allocate escorts more precisely. This would mean fewer occasions where tickets had to be re-booked at a late stage because Tascor had had to add extra escorts, or escorts with particular skills, to a removal.
- 5.31 The escorting contract did not require Tascor to make escorts available on the particular day requested for the removal. Performance measures focused on ensuring that the ticketing process proceeded as quickly as possible, rather than that the dates requested by caseworkers were met. Our file sample of 121 escorted removals (both successful and cancellations) showed that possible travel dates provided to CWT by Tascor were on average 15 days after the requested date for a removal.¹⁰ While the requested removal date on an ERF would normally be at least 10 days after the date when the ERF was submitted, and Tascor would select the travel dates some days in advance, escorts were not given their travel details until the evening before they reported for duty. As well as being allocated jobs at short notice, escorts told us that at times they could be waiting around to be deployed because a cancellation had not registered accurately on the rostering system.

Conclusions

- 5.32 In recent years, the number of enforced removals had declined as the number of voluntary departures had risen. However, requests for tickets for enforced removals and for escorts had increased, due to the large number of cancelled and rescheduled removals. Home Office figures for October 2014 – March 2015 showed that on average 2.5 tickets were issued for each individual successfully removed.
- 5.33 The process of requesting and confirming tickets and, where required, arranging escorts was semi-automated. Home Office caseworkers used an Electronic Request Form (ERF) with the ticketing service provider, Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT), which was routed through the escorting services provider, Tascor, when escorts were required. They also had access to a Best Value Calculator (BVC), developed jointly with CWT, to check and consider travel options. However, the usefulness of the BVC was limited in the case of escorted removals, where there was often little choice of dates when escorts were available, or seats, or alternative routes.

⁹ Figures taken from Home Office analysis of Tascor staff resources, October 2014 – August 2015.

¹⁰ Our sample contained 125 escorted cases, but 4 of these were out of scope.

- 5.34 Availability of escorts was a major constraint. Tascor had increased its staff numbers between November 2014 and August 2015, but had still fallen short (by 2.5%) of the figure in its Target Operating Model (TOM). Tascor was able to provide escorts on average 15 days later than removal date requested by the Home Office caseworker. While the ERF was submitted by the caseworker normally at least 10 days before the requested removal date, the information contained in it was limited, and more detailed information was submitted 72 hours before the scheduled departure. This put pressure on Tascor's planning and efficient deployment of resources.
- 5.35 Where caseworkers did not specify otherwise, CWT agents selected the cheapest fare available, which would normally mean a non-refundable ticket. Some operational units, such as the Family Returns team, regularly stipulated they required refundable tickets because of the high risk of cancellations. Others did not, and the refund rate varied between 48% and 93% for different teams. The Returns Logistics Airline Ticketing Team (RLATT) highlighted the losses from non-refundable tickets in the training it provided to caseworkers, but some operational managers considered the more expensive refundable tickets did not represent good value for money. Overall, there was little obvious agreement within the Home Office, or guidance to decision-makers, about how best to manage this issue.
- 5.36 The Home Office pursued the enforced removal process only when an individual without leave to remain in the UK had failed to depart voluntarily. It was therefore a contested process, which contributed to the high rate of cancelled removals. Individuals took different routes to avoid being removed, including legal challenges and non-compliance with the removals process. The Home Office regarded some of the reasons for failed removals to be 'out of [its] control'. While this might be true in individual cases at the point of removal, it was unclear what steps were being taken to identify lessons that might be applied by the Home Office and others to reduce 'out of control' failures. Based on file sampling, some cancellations also occurred due to administrative errors by caseworkers, because escorts were unavailable, or because changes were made to scheduled departures for other reasons, which indicated a need for both caseworkers and the contractors to tighten up their processes.
- 5.37 In FY 2014/15, the recorded loss on unused tickets was £1.4m, equivalent to 4% of the gross spend on ticketing. However, in the same period caseworkers had not updated CID with removal outcomes in 6% of cases. Failure to record removal outcomes meant that there was no immediate way of knowing where refunds were due and where losses had been incurred, and it reduced the accuracy of the management information available to senior managers regarding the reasons for removal failures and where improvements were needed.

Recommendations

The Home Office should:

1. In order to reduce the logistical difficulties and additional costs created by late changes to escorted removals, work with Tascor to improve the usefulness of the Electronic Request Form (ERF) for risk assessing escorted removals and allocating escorts, and consider what parts of the additional information provided at the 72 hour point could be provided earlier.
2. Regularly review by business area and/or removal category the percentage of, and reasons for, cancelled or failed removals, including those deemed 'out of [Home Office] control', and set a common threshold, and develop guidance for caseworkers, for when to request refundable tickets.
3. Put in place (and monitor) a process that ensures that where travel tickets have been purchased for an unescorted or escorted removal and the removal is cancelled or fails:

- the caseworker updates the Case Information Database (CID) and alerts the travel services contractor at the earliest opportunity (so that the contractor can seek the maximum possible refund);
- escorts deployed out of hours and at week-ends alert the travel services contractor at the earliest opportunity, and the escorting contractor confirms to the caseworker that this has been done.

6. Assurance and Monitoring

Contract Management

- 6.1 In July 2013, following the discovery of anomalies in the invoicing for Ministry of Justice electronic monitoring contracts held by G4S and Serco, the Cabinet Office instigated a cross-government review of major contracts, including the G4S and Serco contracts managed by the Home Office for immigration removal centres (IRCs) and for asylum accommodation. The review found an overall weakness in contract management, as well as a specific failure to monitor invoices adequately, due in part to a lack of access to contractors' data systems. As a result of the review, the Cabinet Office mandated that Departments create improvement plans, develop commercial expertise and provide additional senior oversight of major contracts.
- 6.2 The Home Office subsequently commissioned Moore Stephens to carry out high-level reviews of the contract management arrangements for 14 of its most important contracts. This led to a more in-depth analysis by Moore Stephens of invoicing in five of the 14 contracts, including the Tascor escorting contract. The in-depth analysis was completed in March 2014. The reviews remained unpublished at the time of our inspection, but a summary of Moore Stephens' findings was included in a National Audit Office (NAO) report in September 2014, which compared how effectively the Home Office and Ministry of Justice had responded to the Cabinet Office's recommendations.¹¹ Moore Stephens' high-level findings in relation to the 14 Home Office contracts were:
- over-reliance on contractor data and on self-reporting on performance/invoicing;
 - overlaps and lack of clarity in responsibilities in contract and programme management and lack of ownership; and
 - no clear mechanisms whereby lessons were learned or applied to future contracts.
- 6.3 Following the in-depth analysis of the Tascor contract, Moore Stephens recommended:
- improvements in the accessibility of Tascor data to monitors;
 - clearer mechanisms for resolving and escalating concerns about the accuracy of invoicing; and
 - that continuous improvement and value for money targets should be clarified so that the Home Office would be better able to demonstrate that value was being achieved from the contract.
- 6.4 The NAO reported that there had been a considerable increase in formal senior oversight of the largest contracts in the Home Office in response to these recommendations. A single Commercial Oversight Group had been formed to improve strategic procurement and contract management. The largest and most strategically-significant contracts were now monitored by two branches of the Home Office Corporate Services Directorate: the Internal Audit Unit, which reported up to Home Office directors at the Executive Management Board; and the Commercial Strategy, Intelligence and Performance team, which had the overall responsibility for relationship management. Major suppliers were also managed through regular Executive Oversight Board meetings attended by senior Home Office officials from the Commercial Strategy, Intelligence and Performance team, from operational areas and from supplier senior management.

¹¹ 'Home Office and Ministry of Justice: Transforming contact management' NAO, September 2014

- 6.5 The Home Office also revised its organisational structure in response to the Cabinet Office recommendations. A single Commercial Directorate took on a range of previously devolved responsibilities to provide better continuity between procurement and delivery functions. A cross-Government database SID4GOV was introduced in the Home Office in Spring 2015 to enhance monitoring of contract compliance and performance, and ensure consistency of governance across Home Office contracts. As part of the restructure, compliance and assurance monitoring were devolved to operational contract managers.
- 6.6 The main focus for senior-level assurance and monitoring remained in the largest and most strategic contracts, categorised as ‘Tier 1’ contracts, all of which had been reviewed by Moore Stephens. The Tascor escorting contract was designated Tier 1. Smaller and less strategic contracts, categorised as ‘Tier 2’ or ‘Tier 3’ depending on size, had not been subject to the same level of external scrutiny at the time of our inspection, although use of the SID4GOV software and further internal audits were planned. The Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) travel services contract was designated Tier 2.¹²
- 6.7 Senior Home Office commercial managers told us that commercial expertise within the Home Office had been enhanced through the recruitment of commercial specialists, and by better training for both senior operational managers and those responsible for monitoring contract compliance. These changes had strengthened oversight and clarified operational managers’ ownership of and responsibility for managing successful outcomes for the major contracts providing services in their business areas. With compliance monitoring having become the responsibility of operational staff, the Commercial Directorate focused on strategic management of contractual relationships.

Oversight of the Tascor Contract

- 6.8 Oversight of the Tascor contract was shared between the relevant operational areas, who were responsible for monitoring delivery against a detailed set of performance standards, and commercial teams, who were responsible for overall contract management.¹³ Home Office managers told us that the participation of operational and commercial managers in regular meetings with contractor representatives ensured good communication and the prompt resolution of any issues.
- 6.9 In recognition of its size and strategic importance, as well as monthly contract review meetings attended by operational and commercial staff, a Joint Programme Board had been created to provide an additional layer of governance for the Tascor contract. Also, since the Cabinet Office and Moore Stephens’ reviews, concerns about Tascor’s performance were regularly escalated to the Home Office’s Executive Management Board.
- 6.10 Home Office senior managers told us that previously relationship and performance management in respect of the Tascor contract had suffered because of a series of disputes over the terms of the contract. Within a year of taking over the contract in 2012, Tascor had claimed that it was operating at a loss. While it expected to be able to make significant efficiency savings, Tascor asked the Home Office to increase its funding of the contract to bridge the gap, which the Home Office was unwilling to do. Tascor made a contractual claim in June 2013.
- 6.11 Negotiations aimed at resolving this issue were lengthy and unsuccessful. Some Home Office managers thought the disputes with the contractor had been allowed to go on for too long, and that this could be traced to a gap in commercial expertise at senior levels in the Home Office and a lack of decisive management on the part of Tascor. In 2014, Tascor formally escalated matters, and in February 2015 an Expert Determination was issued that addressed the outstanding areas of disagreement over contract interpretation. Tascor and the Home Office subsequently agreed to create

¹² A contract was defined as Tier 1 if annual spend exceeded £40m and it was categorised by the Home Office as providing a strategically important service, although smaller contracts that were deemed strategic might also qualify as Tier 1. Non-strategic contracts with an annual spend of £5-40m were classified as Tier 2, and the remainder as Tier 3. In FY2014/15, the Home Office managed 23 Tier 1 contracts, 61 Tier 2 contracts, and 5270 Tier 3 contracts.

¹³ Financial and audit functions were carried out by other teams within the Commercial Directorate; operational monitors provided HO Finance teams with data on performance for resolution in terms of service credits.

a Joint Business Plan (JBP) that would seek to reduce Tascor's losses for the remainder of the contract, revise the performance regime to make it less burdensome to Tascor and look for ways to improve removals performance.

- 6.12 Tascor managers commented that the JBP was indicative of the Home Office's more flexible approach to management of the contract. They noted that senior officials were more prepared to focus on strategic priorities than had been the case in the past, and welcomed the new focus on outcomes rather than on the minutiae of contract processes and a rigid insistence on the detail of an over-complicated performance monitoring regime. However, they told us that this approach had yet to become embedded in the Home Office at more junior management levels.
- 6.13 Home Office managers told us that while the JBP had played an important role in improving the relationship with Tascor and in ensuring that the contract would be viable for the remainder of its term, it had not produced the significant efficiency improvements in removals processes that they had hoped for. Progress on revising the performance regime had been slow, in their view due to a lack of commitment on the part of the contractor. Home Office senior managers also believed that the earlier failure to pursue continuous improvement initiatives jointly with Tascor was a by-product of the long-running contract disputes. They noted that the new contracts would include a requirement for partnership working, with innovation included as a deliverable. Meanwhile, Tascor (and CWT) managers believed that the Home Office tended to focus on cost over value, and although there were indications of a cultural shift, this focus continued to limit opportunities for innovative thinking.

Contract Monitoring

Monitoring of the Tascor contract

- 6.14 The Home Office contract with Tascor covered both in-country escorting (ICE) and overseas escorting (OSE). ICE involved the movement of immigration detainees within the UK, including transfers between police stations, reporting centres, immigration or criminal courts, jails, short-term holding facilities and Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs). OSE provided escorts for overseas removals, including collecting a person from a place of detention, conveying them to an airport and escorting them to their final destination.
- 6.15 Performance against contractual obligations was monitored using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The original escorting contract had over 300 KPIs covering all workstreams, of which 51 related directly to delivery of OSE functions. Under the original contract, the contractor was required to meet all KPIs to a 100% standard.
- 6.16 Contract monitoring was the responsibility of the Detainee Escorting and Population Management Unit (DEPMU), part of the Removals Directorate. The monitoring team within DEPMU was tasked with overseeing contractual compliance in respect of all ICE and OSE functions. DEPMU also oversaw detainee welfare.
- 6.17 DEPMU monitors told us they inspected short-term holding facilities, observed detainee transfers and movements within the UK, monitored 'use of force' reports and, less frequently, observed the removal of an individual up to the point where they boarded the aircraft. Most of their monitoring activity was in relation to ICE movements, and they focused predominantly on the timely and continuous provision of service and on the welfare and dignity of the detainee being moved.
- 6.18 In addition, on a daily basis the DEPMU team reconciled the previous day's scheduled removals with the outcome entered on CID and any reports of failed removals received from Tascor. Any outcomes not entered on CID were queried with the caseworker organising the removal to prompt them to enter the outcome. The reconciled data was used to generate pre-mitigation failure figures and compile the reasons for cancellation or failure of removals.

- 6.19 Under the Tascor contract, failures by the contractor to meet KPIs resulted in financial deductions, known as 'service credits', which varied in scale depending on the criticality of the failure. DEPMU told us that the service credit for a failed removal did not reflect the true costs, which could vary widely depending on the number of escorts involved and the number and length of flights, as well as whether refundable tickets had been purchased.¹⁴ Some Home Office managers thought that if service credits were closer to true costs it would drive improvements in performance, but it was also suggested that service credits at these levels would not be commercially viable.
- 6.20 The escorting contract did not place a limit on the number of movement requests to which the contractor was expected to respond. The Home Office provided data on the numbers of movement requests made and the pre-mitigation service levels achieved (against the 100% standard) since the contract was first awarded. Tascor took over the contract in 2012. Figure 6 refers.

Figure 6: Pre-mitigation performance figures for escort contract May 2011-June 2015

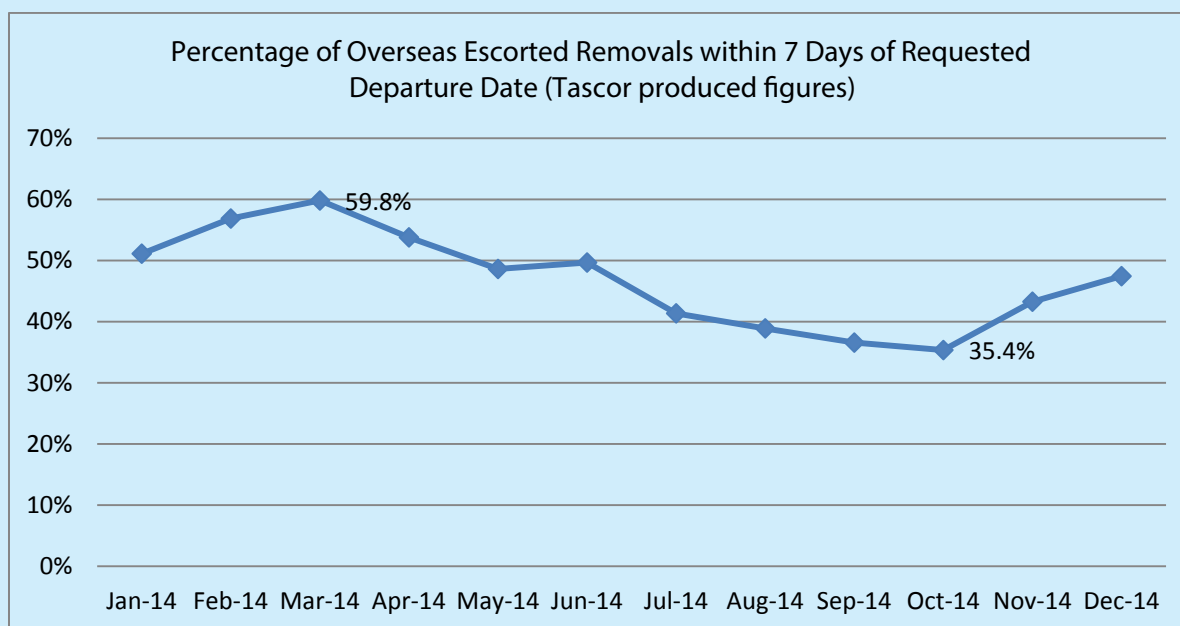
Year	Number of successful OSE removals (including charter flights)	OSE removals failure rate	Number of successful ICE movements	ICE movements failure rate
2011 (May-December)	11694	3.15%	47292	5.64%
2012	17965	2.31%	75250	1.88%
2013	16828	1.26%	76918	4.16%
2014	16036	2.09%	69944	3.49%
2015 (Jan-May)	6020	1.81%	27990	6.85%

- 6.21 Most requests made to Tascor were for in-country (ICE) movements. Home Office managers told us that Tascor's performance had been consistently better for overseas removals (OSE) than for ICE functions. As a result, the bulk of the service credits imposed on Tascor related to the ICE services.
- 6.22 Tascor managers confirmed that the Home Office had focused on monitoring ICE performance and imposing service credits for failure to meet the KPIs. This meant that Tascor had also focused on maintaining ICE service levels, to the potential detriment of OSE performance. They suggested it was not an effective strategy on the part of the Home Office, given that ensuring successful overseas removals was a key Home Office objective.
- 6.23 Tascor managers said that the performance regime was unwieldy, and attempting to manage so many service standards was time-consuming and inefficient. Home Office managers agreed that the number of KPIs in the original contract created an unreasonable burden on Tascor, and had made performance monitoring harder. The reduction in the number of KPIs agreed via the Joint Business Plan (JBP) had therefore been welcomed by both parties.
- 6.24 Under the terms of the escorting contract, the level of service credits payable in any one month was capped. Home Office managers told us that due to Tascor's inability to meet the KPIs, the cap was regularly reached. As a result, the performance regime did not incentivise Tascor to maintain or improve the service it provided.

¹⁴ In January 2016, the Home Office advised the ICIBI that the service credit schedule is an estimate of costs across all removals and that they would expect to see variance between individual cases.

- 6.25 In order to address this issue, a new system was introduced in December 2013 involving ‘Service Improvement Notices’ (SINs).¹⁵ Under this new system the Home Office would seek a service credit only if the service did not improve to the agreed level after a number of SINs had been issued. In addition, the 100% performance standard was replaced with a sliding scale. For OSE functions, initially this was between 100% (no service credit) and 98% or less (maximum service credit). In December 2014, the Home Office agreed to a further revision to the sliding scale for OSE service levels: 95% and above (no service credit) to 90% or less (maximum service credit).
- 6.26 The terms of the original contract did not require the contractor to provide escorts within a set time from the date of removal specified in the ERF. Home Office managers told us that this was due to those designing the contract not having understood the risk that escort resources would fall below the level needed to satisfy demand. It was now recognised that this requirement should have been included in the contract.
- 6.27 In response to complaints from operational areas about significant delays to removals because escorts were not being provided on the date requested, Tascor proposed monitoring its performance against an informal KPI. This required Tascor to make escorts available within 7 days of the requested departure date. Tascor’s own data for its performance against this standard during 2014 is set out in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Percentage of escorts provided within 7 days of requested date



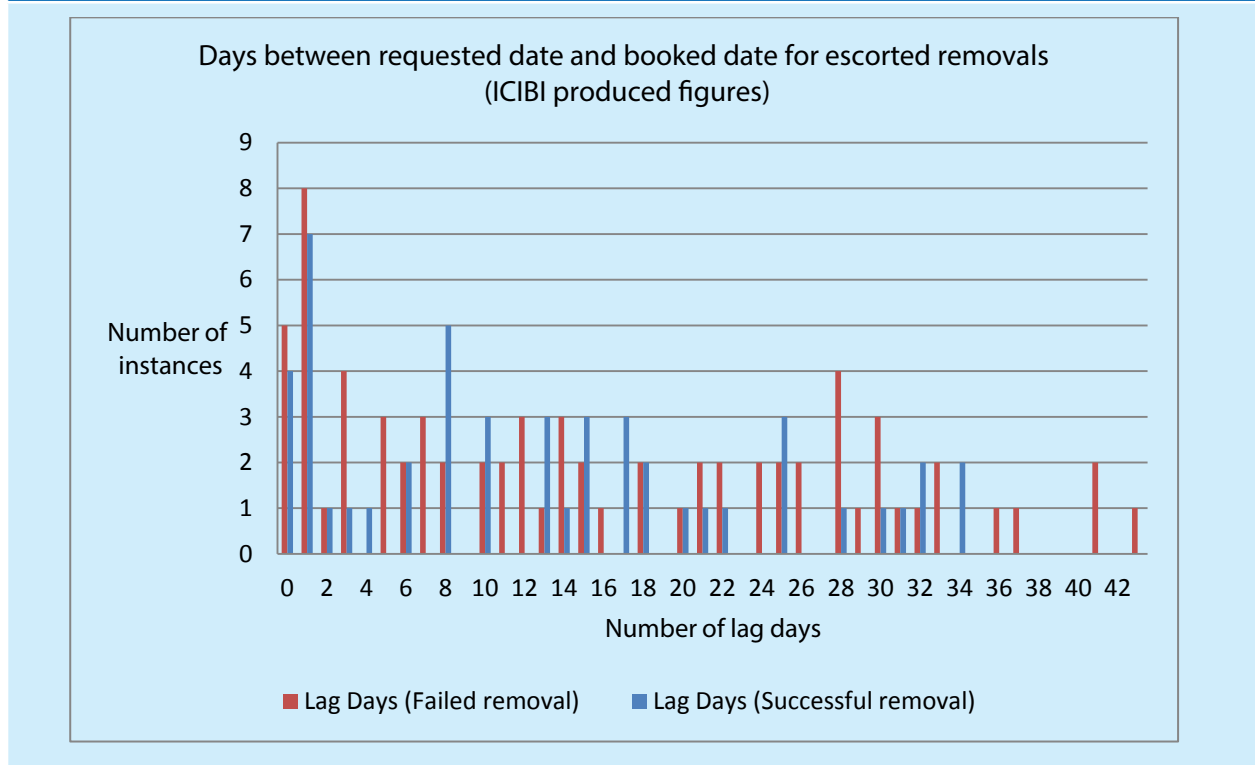
Note: Data compiled from graphs presented by Tascor at contract management meetings

- 6.28 In our file sample of 121 escorted removals (49 successful and 72 failed removal attempts) booked between the beginning of January 2014 and the end of June 2015, we looked at the time lag between the date requested for removal and the date Tascor made escorts available.¹⁶ Figure 8 refers. In around a third of the sampled cases this was 7 days or less (including nine cases where the escorts were made available on the date requested). The average was 14.5 days. In August 2015, Tascor reported to the Home Office that the average time lag was between 15 and 17 days.

¹⁵ This change was backdated to 1/4/13.

¹⁶ We sampled 125 escorted cases in total, but in 4 of these there was insufficient data to compare requested dates to dates when escorts were available.

Figure 8: File sample lag times between requested and booked date



- 6.29 Home Office managers told us they had had difficulty validating Tascor’s reported performance against the 7-day target, and had repeatedly requested the detailed data behind Tascor’s graphs. However, they acknowledged that Tascor was under no contractual obligation either to meet the self-imposed 7-day target or to provide data to substantiate their reported performance.¹⁷
- 6.30 In our file sample, successful removals took place on average 13 days after the requested removal date, and unsuccessful removals on average 16 days after the requested removal date. The sample size was too small to provide a reliable insight into the impact, if any, of a shorter or longer time lag.
- 6.31 Under KPI OS29 of the escorting contract, Tascor was required to provide the Home Office with a written debrief of all escorted removals within 24 hours of a failed removal, or within 24 hours of the escorts’ return to the UK in the case of a successful removal. Tascor escorts told us that filling in the relevant form was standard procedure and that this was particularly important where a removal had failed, although they were aware that escorts did not always complete the forms as required.
- 6.32 DEPMU told us they did not always receive a written debrief or only parts of the form would be sent, which required them to follow up with Tascor to obtain the necessary information. In October 2015, contract monitors told us they hoped soon to be able to resolve this issue, as they had just been granted direct access to Tascor’s reporting system, which would enable them to see the relevant documents at source.
- 6.33 Under KPI OS30, escorts were required to inform the travel services contractor immediately in the event of a failed removal. This would enable Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) to recover the maximum possible refund against unused tickets. We were not provided with any evidence to show that this KPI was being monitored. Removals Logistics Airline Ticketing Team (RLATT) and CWT staff told us that escorts did not always report failed removals promptly. However, their understanding was that primary responsibility for reporting cancellations rested with the Home Office caseworker.

¹⁷ In January 2016, the Home Office informed the ICIBI that it had seen Tascor’s data, but that it had to view it at the contractor’s HQ as the database was too large to receive by email.

Monitoring of the Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) contract

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- 6.34 The Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) travel services contract contained measurements, referred to as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or sometimes Key Performance Standards.
- 6.35 The CWT contract specified 47 KPIs, 20 of which covered the provision of systems and personnel to purchase tickets and, where necessary, to cancel bookings and process refunds. Three of these 20 KPIs referred explicitly to the requirement for CWT to liaise with the escorting contractor in order to ensure timely and accurate transfer of information so that escorted removals might be booked promptly.¹⁸
- 6.36 For the purposes of this inspection, we looked at the KPIs relating to the timeliness and accuracy of the ticketing process, the value for money of tickets purchased, and the effectiveness of the process whereby cancelled tickets were refunded. These specifications are set out in Figure 9.

Figure 9: CWT key performance indicators

KPI reference	KPI detail	What is monitored
Service specification TS14: timeliness	'No failure to advise the Authority within 3 hours of the scheduled Service Request being made that a ticket has been booked.' ¹⁹	Time taken to respond to ERF
Service specification TS09: accuracy	'No failure to ensure that the accuracy of booking data is checked and validated automatically prior to the purchase of any ticket.'	Correct ticket(s) purchased, including accurate passenger details
Service specification TS05: value	'No failure to allocate, reserve and purchase tickets in accordance with the Travel Information Guide and Best Value Process.'	Evidence that BVC and TIG were used
Service specification TS18: refund process	'No failure, upon cancellation of a removal, to cancel all related items within 2 hours of notification and to ensure that all refunds are transferred to the Authority within 4 business days of cancellation.'	Evidence that ticket(s) were cancelled and refunds received within specified times

Financial deductions ('service credits')

- 6.37 If CWT did not meet its contracted KPIs, the Home Office could enforce financial deductions ('service credits'). These were subject to a two-stage mitigation process. First, the Home Office issued a notice of failures to CWT, giving the latter the opportunity to respond with any mitigating reasons why a financial deduction was not warranted. For example, CWT might argue that the failure was the fault of another party, typically Tascor. Based on CWT, Home Office and/or Tascor data, the Home Office and CWT would then reach an agreement on whether a service credit was due.

¹⁸ The other 27 KPIs in the service specification dealt with wider airfare, charter flight and hotel booking expectations.

¹⁹ TS14 originally specified a 2 hour standard for response to an ERF, which was amended to 3 hours in 2013.

Timeliness

- 6.38 During file sampling, we noted that the booking data provided to the Home Office by CWT gave the date on which the booking had been made but not the time of day. Therefore, it was not possible to calculate how many hours had elapsed between the request and the booking, and consequently we were unable to test CWT's performance against KPI TS14. The Home Office Removals Logistics Airline Ticketing Team (RLATT) responsible for monitoring CWT's performance against the contract confirmed this was the case for all bookings.
- 6.39 RLATT told us it had confidence in CWT's professionalism, and that it was not practical for RLATT to monitor the timeliness of ticketing transactions, given the number of such transactions. However, RLATT said it routinely carried out dip sampling exercises against the CWT data reports, and also relied on caseworkers to alert it to instances where CWT responses did not meet the standard set out in the KPI.
- 6.40 CWT managers considered the KPI for timeliness was not aligned with a genuine business need. In their view, there was no operational requirement to book all tickets within such a short timeframe, and it meant CWT had had to employ more people outside normal working hours than was operationally necessary, at an additional cost that was passed on to the Home Office.
- 6.41 Home Office commercial managers told us that, as immigration removals was a 24hr operation, good service levels for ticketing were required around the clock. The contract specifications were designed to ensure that the Home Office received a consistent, robust and efficient service. However, the contract did recognise that demand during 'night hours' was reduced. CWT resources were profiled against this understanding.
- 6.42 Both CWT staff and RLATT told us that there was an issue with Tascor 'batching' ticketing requests. Tascor received overseas escorting movement requests throughout the day from the Home Office, but rather than process them immediately upon receipt it waited until later in the day to process a batch together. This was logistically more efficient for Tascor, as it helped with their planning of work rosters. CWT told us that the arrival of numerous requests from Tascor at the end of the working day required them to reallocate staff, and sometimes increase out of hours working, in order to meet their timeliness KPI.

Accuracy

- 6.43 RLATT told us that it did not independently monitor the accuracy of CWT's bookings (correct names, dates, flights). It relied on dip sampling, reports of inaccuracy from caseworkers and on CWT's self-reporting to identify instances when service fell short of the 100% accuracy level required. Monitors said they had confidence in CWT's data and in its overall performance.

Best Value

- 6.44 CWT staff and managers and RLATT told us that CWT staff always made use of the Travel Information Guide (TIG) and the Best Value Calculator (BVC) when booking tickets. The TIG was updated jointly by CWT and Home Office staff to ensure it accurately reflected current conditions for air travel. RLATT did not check performance against this KPI, but managers told us they were content with CWT's assurance that its ticketing agents were using both systems, as they were required to do.
- 6.45 CWT managers told us that, for each Electronic Referral Form (ERF) processed, an electronic copy of the BVC showing all the parameters defined and the three costed options was retained with the booking to provide an audit trail showing that the Best Value process had been followed.

- 6.46 We sampled 250 cases where tickets had been purchased. In none of these cases had the Home Office caseworker copied the details of the BVC output emailed to them by CWT into the notes field of the Case Information Database (CID). Therefore, it was not possible to verify from Home Office records whether the Best Value process had been followed. It was also not possible to confirm what consideration the caseworker had given to the options presented to them.

Refunds

- 6.47 CWT managers told us they kept track of all outstanding refunds, and reported on these regularly to the Home Office. The sample data provided to us was organised by carrier and by the length of time that refund requests had remained outstanding. RLATTT told us that the overall level of refunds received was monitored on a monthly basis, using the information supplied by CWT. RLATTT did not monitor against individual tickets to ensure that cancelled tickets had been refunded and at the level specified in the booking. This was in part because refund processing and payment times varied enormously from carrier to carrier, with some paying refunds within a few days while others might take several months to make a payment, and also because the data was held on three different systems.
- 6.48 The Home Office reported on ticket transactions by outcome. Figures 10 and 11²⁰ cover ticket transactions between 1 Jan 2014 and 30 Jun 2015.

Figure 10: Number of ticket transactions 1 January 2014–30 June 2015

Volumes	Number of tickets issued	Number of tickets used for removal	Number of 'unoutcomed' cases on CID	Number of tickets cancelled	Number of tickets refunded
Unescorted Subjects	24953	11194	1946 (7.8%)	11814	13582
Escorted Subjects	9569	3917	923 (9.6%)	4729	5686
Escorts	37419	12513	7454 (19.9%)	17456	23096
Total	71941	27624	10323	33999	42364

Figure 11: Cost of ticket transactions 1 January 2014–30 June 2015

Costs	Cost of tickets issued	Cost of tickets where individual was removed	Cost of tickets where case was 'unoutcomed' on CID	Cost of tickets cancelled	Amount of refunds received
Unescorted Subjects	£14,389,996.89	£5,886,900.46	£1,020,146.83	£7,483,402.16	£7,324,758.21
Escorted Subjects	£5,393,910.17	£2,046,137.58	£544,774.40	£2,802,998.19	£2,977,361.11
Escorts	£33,653,423.67	£10,111,792.03	£7,020,073.39	£16,523,255.65	£19,848,408.35
Total	£53,437,330.73	£18,044,830.07	£8,584,994.62	£26,809,656.00	£30,150,527.67

Note: Tables compiled from data provided by Home Office

²⁰ The issued tickets in Figure 10 do not sum to the total of removed, unoutcomed and cancelled tickets as some tickets outcomed in the period 01/01/14 – 30/06/15 will have been issued before 01/01/14. Likewise, the numbers of tickets refunded is greater than those cancelled as this will include refunds from tickets issued before 01/01/14 and will also include some unoutcomed tickets.

- 6.49 Some of the ‘unoutcomed’ tickets will have been issued for flights scheduled for after the time the data was extracted, so there was no outcome to record on CID. Home Office monitors suggested that the majority of the remainder were probably where removal directions had been put in place and cancelled several times. While the final outcome might have been recorded on CID, the caseworker might have failed to update earlier attempts. The RLATT team told us that such data entry errors made monitoring of removal outcomes more difficult and reduced their ability to track spend and potential losses on tickets across different operational areas, but they did not affect CWT’s ability to pursue refunds from the carriers. RLATT was confident this was being done to the required standard.

Service Credits

- 6.50 For the period 1 Jan 2014 to 30 Jun 2015, a total of 41 service credits were levied against CWT. Following the mitigation process, 12 of these led to financial deductions. Home Office managers told us that the very low level of service credits incurred by CWT was indicative of the contractor’s excellent performance. They said that although there were areas where it was possible that failures were under-reported, they believed these were very few compared to the volume of transactions.

Re-procurement of the escorting and travel services contracts

- 6.51 The escorting and travel services contracts held by Tascor and Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) had both been extended at the time of our inspection, and were due to be retendered.
- 6.52 The Home Office had begun approaching potential suppliers in early 2015. Home Office operational areas had been involved in discussions about contract specifications and requirements to ensure that operational outcomes were prioritised. Home Office operational and commercial managers told us that a range of options was being considered regarding how escorting and travel services should be delivered in future; for example whether the required services could be grouped differently, perhaps under a single supplier, in order to reduce the hand-offs between suppliers and improve efficiency.
- 6.53 Staff managing the re-procurement process told us that lessons learned from the existing contracts were informing the tendering process and the development of draft terms and conditions and performance measures. Also, the re-procurement team was exploring the possibility of reducing ticket costs by improving information flows; for example, finding a digital solution to notifying the travel services contractor promptly in the event of a removal being cancelled. Overall, the Home Office was making efforts to ensure the market had an accurate picture of contract requirements and constraints, including the high levels of cancellations and reschedulings, to avoid the misunderstandings that had dogged the escorting contract.

Conclusions

- 6.54 Cabinet Office-led initiatives post-July 2013 to improve the management of commercial contracts across the Civil Service had resulted in improvements within the Home Office, including formal senior oversight of major contracts, the recruitment of staff with commercial expertise and structural changes to improve contract monitoring by operational and commercial managers.
- 6.55 The Tascor contract had been designated strategically significant and was being monitored by the Home Office’s Executive Management Board, ensuring that any performance or contractual issues were regularly reviewed at director level. Tascor and the Home Office had been involved in a series of disputes about the escorting contract almost from the outset, stemming from Tascor’s view that there was a significant gap between the value of the contract and the cost of providing the contracted services. These disputes had been allowed to carry on for too long, affecting relationships and progress towards resolving performance issues. Tascor made a contractual claim in June 2013, which was formally rejected by the Home Office. A subsequent formal claim in 2014 was resolved in February 2015, and a Joint Business Plan (JBP) was created that sought to reduce Tascor’s losses for the remainder of the contract, revise the performance regime to make it less burdensome to Tascor

(and more manageable for the Home Office) and to look for ways to improve removals performance. As a result, the relationship had improved and Tascor welcomed what it saw as a more strategic and outcome-focused approach by Home Office senior managers. However, the Home Office had yet to see the significant performance improvements it was looking for.

- 6.56 In 2013, the Home Office had commissioned an external review of its major contracts by Moore Stephens. This had identified *inter alia* an over-reliance on contractor data and self-reporting on performance. The inspection found that this continued to be true of both the Tascor and Carlson Wagonlit contracts. The excessive number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) originally specified in the contracts – over 300 for the escorting contract and 47 for the travel contract – had not helped. Some of the KPIs themselves had been poorly conceived (lacking any means of measurement or monitoring), had omitted important deliverables (such as provision of escorts within a certain timeframe) and had been misunderstood by the relevant parties (for example, the required response time for ticket bookings). The contractors had found the performance reporting regimes onerous, as had the Home Office, and felt some KPIs had not been aligned with operational needs. Overall, the KPIs had failed to incentivise the contractors to improve their performance.
- 6.57 Despite rationalising the KPI regimes, the activity levels meant it would not be efficient for the Home Office to seek to monitor 100% of transactions. Nonetheless, it was too ready to accept the contractors' data and self-assessments without proper challenge, and in particular it needed to do more to analyse (and manage) the financial and operational impacts of delays in providing escorts and to validate that refunds on cancelled tickets were being pursued aggressively. The revised approach towards a more strategic, more outcome-focused way of managing the contracts was more productive, but the contractors still needed to be held to account (and penalised financially through 'service credits') for specific performance failings where these occurred.
- 6.58 The escorting and travel services contracts intersected at several points: Tascor was dependent on CWT for accurate and timely provision of tickets for escorts; CWT relied on Tascor at various stages in the ticketing and cancellation processes in order to meet their targets. Mechanisms for ensuring that dependencies were managed efficiently were not consistent, nor always enforced. The 'batching' of ticketing requests by Tascor, for example, and Tascor not notifying CWT of failed removals as promptly as possible added to the Home Office's costs (either directly or by reducing 'service credits'). Despite these obvious dependencies, the original performance regimes of the two contracts had not been designed to encourage cooperation between contractors.
- 6.59 It appeared that Home Office managers had learned the key lessons from the existing escorting and travel services contracts and were applying them to the re-procurement exercise, which had begun in early 2015. For example, the work already done to revise the current performance regimes was informing the performance requirements for the new contract(s). Most importantly, the Home Office had involved operational staff in the re-procurement exercise to ensure that the new contract(s) prioritised operational needs and that potential bidders were presented with an accurate picture of the practical difficulties and constraints of the removals process.

Recommendations

The Home Office should:

4. Given the co-dependencies of the escorting and travel services contracts, consider re-designating the latter 'Tier 1', and reviewing both together at senior level, where relevant applying the lessons from Moore Stephens and other reviews to both.
5. Having relaxed the current performance regime and reduced Tascor's losses for the remainder of the current escorting contract, press Tascor to deliver as required in relation to the 'significant efficiency improvements' to the removals process envisaged in the Joint Business Plan.
6. Conduct a detailed analysis of the operational and financial impacts of delays between the date requested for a removal and the date escorts are made available, using the results to improve the effectiveness of current processes and to inform future performance measures, including financial deductions ('service credits').
7. In designing the performance regime for the new escorting and travel services contract(s), ensure that:
 - KPIs focus on outcomes, striking a balance between operational delivery and costs (including refunds) and do not distort performance by an over-emphasis on certain activities (e.g. ICE (In-Country Escorting) movements);
 - the number of KPIs is manageable for all parties;
 - performance data can be monitored and validated independently (where necessary through Home Office direct access to contractors' systems and full data sharing); and
 - any deductions (e.g. 'service credits') and conditions (e.g. sliding scales, caps) are correctly applied and used to incentivise continuous improvement and, where appropriate, collaboration between contractors.

7. Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation

Background

- 7.1 Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation was opened in August 2011 to provide accommodation for families with children under the age of 18 who had reached the final stage of the enforced returns process. This followed the Government's decision to end child detention.
- 7.2 Cedars provided nine self-contained units where families could stay for up to 72 hours, or exceptionally up to one week with Ministerial approval, before departure from the UK. Cedars was run by G4S, the contractor responsible for the management of the nearby Tinsley House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC), but welfare and social work services were provided by Barnardo's under a grant-funded agreement with the Home Office.

Operating costs

- 7.3 Our 2015 Removals inspection reported that those concerned with the daily management of Cedars acknowledged that the facility was under-utilised.²¹ At the time of that inspection, discussions were taking place about the future use of Cedars, while work was also underway with the agencies responsible for operating the facility to identify ways of cutting overall operating costs. Home Office figures for the annual operating costs for Cedars provided at the time of that inspection are set out in Figure 12:

Figure 12: Annual Operating Costs of Cedars since it opened²²	
Year	Cost (£)
2011/12	6,414,733
2012/13	7,626,078
2013/14	5,556,939
2014/15 (forecast)	6,398,869 ²³
Total	25,996,619

Figure 12: Cedars operating costs 2011-FY 2014/15

- 7.4 As a result of the discussions on cutting costs, by January 2016 the G4S operating fee was to have reduced by £909,000 (24.2%) from the October 2014 level of £3,751,000. The Barnardo's grant was also reduced from £1,898,473 in FY 2014/15 to £1,484,237 in FY 2015/16, a reduction of 22%. The G4S reduction was implemented in two stages, with the first stage in May 2015.²⁴
- 7.5 The overall savings in FY 2015/16 were forecast at £1.5m. They were based on agreed reductions in the maximum occupancy of Cedars (from nine to three families at any one time), in staffing levels and in the use of sub-contractors for services such as maintenance and catering. Saving costs by operating a reduced schedule was not pursued because Home Office managers considered Cedars needed to remain open at all times, as families might arrive there at any time, day and night. Cedars therefore continued to be staffed on a 24 hour basis.

21 <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ICIBI-report-on-Removals-17.12.2015.pdf>.

22 As quoted in Removals report, December 2015.

23 In January 2016, the Home Office confirmed the final figure for 2014/15 was £5,757,284.40.

24 The G4S figures quoted are exclusive of VAT. The Barnardo's grant is a maximum value; any underspend would be returned to the Home Office.

Occupancy

- 7.6 We were told that occupancy of Cedars was lower than had been predicted when the facility was opened, and that there had been months when no families had been accommodated there. Figure 13 gives a breakdown of occupancy and successful removals between 2011 and June 2015.

Figure 13: Cedars occupancy and removal rates

Year	Families Housed	Total Adults	Total Children	Families Removed
2011 (Aug-Dec)	18	N/K	35	15
2012	60	87	122	31
2013	48	66	99	23
2014	18	22	32	10
2015 (Jan- Aug)	15	20	33	3
Total	159	195 plus	321	82

Note: Data provided by Home Office

- 7.7 Low occupancy of Cedars was first raised at a senior management level in March 2014. G4S and the Home Office undertook jointly to explore options for increasing usage of Cedars.²⁵ At the same time, the Home Office sought proposals from Barnardo's for increasing occupancy and identifying potential costs savings. These discussions resulted in the agreement to limit occupancy to a maximum of three families at any one time, effective from May 2015, and the consequent reductions in G4S's and Barnardo's staff numbers and costs.
- 7.8 Barnardo's managers told us that their staff at Cedars were fully employed, despite the low occupancy rate, either in reviewing plans for families who had entered the enforced returns process, or in designing and delivering safeguarding training for Home Office and contractor staff at other locations. Although opposed to the detention of families other than as a last resort and then for the shortest possible time, they thought the Home Office could increase the occupancy of Cedars if it were better at managing the Family Returns Process. Home Office managers disagreed. They believed the high failure rate for removals of families using Cedars, due to non-compliance or to the families pursuing last-minute legal challenges, would continue to limit potential throughput. Alternative uses for Cedars had been considered by all parties, but we were told that it had been decided Cedars was too specialised a facility to be suitable for other users.

The facility

- 7.9 Cedars had been equipped and finished to a high standard, in particular with a wide range of both recreational and educational facilities for children. Both Barnardo's and Home Office managers said that this specification clearly differentiated Cedars from Home Office detention facilities, in line with the Government commitment to end child detention. Barnardo's managers told us that the excellent facilities at Cedars were aimed at ensuring that children who were innocently caught up in the enforced removal process were safeguarded as well as possible, and that the traumatic effects of the returns process were minimised. They saw the provision of such facilities as fulfilling part of their safeguarding duties.
- 7.10 Home Office senior managers told us that as it had been the only charity prepared to take on responsibility for the social and welfare needs of families passing through Cedars, Barnardo's had been in a position at the outset to stipulate how the facility should be run and its specification. Home Office staff believed Barnardo's continued to exercise considerable control over the daily management of Cedars.

²⁵ G4S EOB Papers March 2014.

Deterrent effect

- 7.11 Home Office senior managers believed that Cedars performed an important strategic function in that the fact of its existence motivated families to cooperate with the family returns process at an earlier stage and to depart the UK voluntarily. They claimed that the rise in voluntary departures, which in 2014/15 accounted for 89% of all family returns, was in part attributable to the deterrent effect of Cedars.²⁶

Conclusion

- 7.12 As the only charity willing to work with the Home Office in the setting up of Cedars, Barnardo's played a vital role preserving the Home Office's ability to enforce family removals following the Government's commitment to end child detention. Barnardo's had continued to exercise a major, if not controlling, influence over the running of Cedars. In doing so, it had been solely focused on its core purpose to support the most vulnerable children, by ensuring to the best of its abilities that the needs and emotional well-being of families accommodated at Cedars were met.
- 7.13 While it answered a political and practical need, based on the number of families successfully removed from Cedars, from the outset the facility has represented poor value for money, the more so since 2014. The Home Office was slow to react, taking over a year to reach agreement with the service providers, G4S and Barnardo's, about operating cost reductions. Even with these savings, projected to be £1.5m in 2015/16 and more in future years, Cedars remained expensive. While the Home Office might require some form of pre-departure accommodation to support enforced family removals, this requirement could be satisfied by a smaller facility operated at a lower cost, not least by compromising on the provision of 24/7 staffing unless there was a family in residence, which had not been the case at Cedars.
- 7.14 Home Office senior managers claimed that Cedars had an important strategic function in that the fact of its existence motivated families to cooperate with the family returns process at an earlier stage and to depart the UK voluntarily. They claimed that the rise in voluntary departures was in part attributable to the deterrent effect of Cedars. Accepting that it would be mostly anecdotal, no evidence was produced to support this assertion.

Recommendation

The Home Office should:

8. Conduct a fundamental review of the requirement for Pre-Departure Accommodation for families with children under the age of 18, with a view to providing facilities, including welfare and other essential support, that are appropriate in scale, nature and cost to the projected demand for and proven value of such accommodation.

²⁶ Figures for family voluntary departures taken from Removals report.

Appendix 1: Role and Remit of the Chief Inspector

The role of the Independent Chief Inspector ('the Chief Inspector') of the UK Border Agency (the Agency) was established by the UK Borders Act 2007 to examine and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency. In 2009, the Independent Chief Inspector's remit was extended to include customs functions and contractors.

On 26 April 2009, the Independent Chief Inspector was also appointed to the statutory role of independent Monitor for Entry Clearance Refusals without the Right of Appeal as set out in section 23 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, as amended by section 4(2) of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006.

On 20 February 2012, the Home Secretary announced that Border Force would be taken out of the Agency to become a separate operational command within the Home Office. The Home Secretary confirmed that this change would not affect the Chief Inspector's statutory responsibilities and that he would continue to be responsible for inspecting the operations of both the Agency and the Border Force.

On 22 March 2012, the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency's title changed to become the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. His statutory responsibilities remain the same. The Chief Inspector is independent of the Home Office and the Border Force, and reports directly to the Home Secretary.

On 26 March 2013 the Home Secretary announced that the UK Border Agency was to be broken up and brought back into the Home Office, reporting directly to Ministers, under a new package of reforms. The Independent Chief Inspector will continue to inspect the UK's border and immigration functions, as well as contractors employed by the Home Office to deliver any of these functions. Under the new arrangements, the UK Visas and Immigrations department (UKVI) was introduced under the direction of a Director General.

Appendix 2: Inspection Framework and Core Criteria

The criteria used in this inspection were taken from the Independent Chief Inspector's Core Inspection Criteria. These are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Inspection criteria used.
Operational Delivery
9. Decisions on the entry, stay and removal of individuals should be taken in accordance with the law and the principles of good administration.
3. Resources should be allocated to support operational delivery and achieve value for money.
4. Complaints procedures should operate in accordance with the recognised principles of complaints handling
Safeguarding Individuals
5. All individuals should be treated with dignity and respect and without discrimination in accordance with the law.
7. All border and immigration functions should be carried out with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
8. Personal data of individuals should be treated and stored securely in accordance with the relevant legislation and regulations.
Continuous Improvement
9. The implementation of policies and processes should support the efficient and effective delivery of border and immigration functions.
10. Risks to operational delivery should be identified, monitored and mitigated.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Home Office for its co-operation and assistance during the course of this inspection, and appreciate the contributions from staff and stakeholders who participated.

Assistant Chief Inspector: **Garry Cullen**

Lead Inspector: **Anna Marslen-Wilson**

Inspector: **Chris Thompson**

ISBN 978-1-4741-3033-2



9 781474 130332