



# Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

**Annual Report  
for the period  
1 April 2017 to  
31 March 2018**





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1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018**

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

June 2018



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## **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.gov.uk/ICIBI](http://www.gov.uk/ICIBI)

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# Contents

Foreword	3
Role and Remit	7
Inspection Findings 2017-18	11
Independent Advisory Group on Country Information	29
Working with others	31
Resources and planning	35
Appendix 1: Inspection Reports published in 2017-18	39
Appendix 2: Reviews of Country Information 2017-18	41
Appendix 3: Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2017-18	43
Appendix 4: Updated 3-Year Inspection Plan 2017-18 – 2019-20	45





# Foreword

My primary objective for 2017-18 was to deliver a balanced and broadly-based programme of inspections, covering as much of my published 2017-18 Inspection Plan as possible, having first made up the ground 'lost' in 2016-17 due to staff shortages.



This objective was achieved. By 31 March 2018, 20 inspection reports had been published, more than in any previous year, while a further completed report was with the Home Secretary awaiting publication and 6 inspections were underway.

The only substantive topic from the 2016-17 and 2017-18 Plans that I was unable to cover was National Health Service charging (in the context of the "compliant environment" measures introduced in the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts). This has now been included in my updated Plan for 2018-19 (see 'Outlook and Plans').

The framework of 'Themes', 'Areas' and 'Topics' created in 2016 for my rolling 3-Year Plan continued to work, both as a planning tool and as a check against the Inspectorate losing sight of any important issues. Output was reasonably well balanced across the Plan's 5 inspection 'Themes'. Although 'Working with others' (Theme 4) was not the main focus of any of the inspections published in 2017-18 several reports touched on this, and in February 2018 work began on 'An inspection of Home Office partnership working with other government departments'.

While there were more inspection reports published in 2017-18, I made fewer recommendations than in 2016-17 (down from 103 to 91). This was due in part to there being more re-inspections, where the emphasis was on identifying what still needed to be done to "close" the original recommendations, rather than looking to add new ones.

Of the 91 recommendations, 62 (68%) were accepted, 23 (25%) were partially accepted, and 6 (7%) were rejected. This compares to 88 (85%), 13 (13%), and 2 (2%) in 2016-17.

The Inspectorate does not look to measure its success by how many recommendations are accepted, whether fully or partially. This may provide a crude 'health check' of the working relationship with the Home Office, and a large percentage or pattern of rejected recommendations could suggest a problem. However, the figures are less important than the substance of the Home Office's responses and what action it takes. Though harder to measure, these are better indicators of the Inspectorate's impact and value in helping the Home Office to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of its border and immigration functions.

My objective is to increase the impact and value of inspections year on year. In 2017-18, I believe this objective was met in part. There are several strands to it, some of which worked better than others.

On the plus side, there was more coherence and continuity to the inspection programme, which had been one of my aims when I produced my first 3-Year Plan in 2016. This was achieved through the sequencing of complementary inspections, enabling different aspects of a particular 'Area' or 'Topic' to be explored in greater depth than would have been possible in a single inspection, and through more follow-up inspection work (involving either a focused re-inspection or revisiting previous findings and recommendations as part of a 'new' inspection).

Less positively, while just 11 (4%) of the 288 recommendations I have made since May 2015 have been rejected, at the end of 2017-18 the Home Office's own records indicated that over 40% of accepted recommendations were still "open", meaning the necessary action(s) had yet to be completed. I will be looking to test this more closely in 2018-19, but it is broadly in line with my own findings. (Re-)inspections in 2017-18 found that around half of my earlier recommendations required more work before they could be considered "closed".

I have written and spoken to the Home Office repeatedly about the need for SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) responses to recommendations. Too often the response has left it unclear exactly what action will be taken and by when. To compensate, my recommendations have become more prescriptive. This goes some of the way to explaining the increase in partial acceptances and rejections in 2017-18, since a number of Home Office responses acknowledged the inspection findings and the need for improvement, but rejected my recommended remedy. The 'how' can sometimes be important, but in general I have no objection if the Home Office finds an alternative way of achieving the required improvements, provided it works.

During 2017, of 15 reports sent to the Home Secretary only 3 were laid in Parliament within 8 weeks. The average for the rest was 13 weeks, and one took 23 weeks. Some of the delays were due to 'purdah' prior to the General Election or to Parliamentary recesses, but some were less explicable. In March 2018, 5 more reports were laid, all within 8 weeks of my sending them to the Home Secretary, all on the same day.

Delays, and the release of reports in batches, inevitably raise questions about my independence and about the Home Office's management of 'bad news'. I have no concerns about the former. The Inspectorate's processes are robust and interactions with Ministers and officials are always professional. As to the latter, while publication of several reports on the same day may affect the media coverage each receives and therefore how widely they are read, my focus has been on urging the Home Office not to wait until the report is laid before beginning to make the recommended improvements. This happens in some cases, but the department has often moved more slowly than I had hoped it would.

A personal objective for 2017-18 was for me to spend a greater proportion of my time on inspections. This was made possible by the recruitment of a Senior Civil Servant 'Chief of Staff' to take responsibility for day-to-day management of staff and resources, allowing me to concentrate on steering inspections and ensuring a consistent standard of planning, evidence gathering, analysis and reporting.

While I would have liked to have spent more time ‘in the field’, I did manage to return to Amman (I had visited previously in March 2016) for the inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and to follow-up on the 2016 inspection of family reunion applications (both reports are due for publication in early 2018-19). As well as speaking with Home Office staff based at our Embassy, and with Australian and Canadian officials about their resettlement schemes, I also met UNHCR and IOM staff and managers, and was given a tour of the latter’s medical clinic and taken to see UNHCR’s Al Zaatari refugee camp. I am grateful to everyone concerned for their hospitality and candour.



I made 2 other visits in connection with the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme inspection. The first was to Kingston-upon-Thames to attend a Community Sponsorship Scheme ‘roadshow’ for local groups, organised by the Home Office and introduced by the Immigration Minister, at which a delegation from Canada spoke encouragingly about community sponsorship in Canada. The second was to Birmingham Airport to meet a charter flight arrival of Syrian refugees who were being resettled in the East and West Midlands. On both visits, I was struck by the upbeat attitude of the Home Office staff I met and the obvious job satisfaction they derived from being able to help vulnerable refugees.

By way of contrast, I also observed a removals charter flight, including the operational briefing of the escorts, the collection of detainees from an Immigration Removal Centre, the boarding of the flight, the flight itself, and the return. While it falls to Her Majesty’s Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) to inspect and report on “functions at removal centres”, including removals charter flights, it was interesting to see at first-hand how this process worked, and to witness the professionalism of the escorts, and I believe the experience will help me in any related inspection work that I might do.

Effective engagement with external stakeholders is clearly important for the Inspectorate: it ensures we stay in touch with the concerns of those affected by the Home Office’s borders and immigration functions, while evidence from stakeholders adds to the relevance and authenticity of inspections. As in previous years, I looked for ways to improve this engagement, with some success (see ‘Working with others’).

The migration of the Inspectorate’s website to GOV.UK in July 2017 (after ensuring that I would retain complete editorial control) has made a significant difference to our ‘public face’. The new website looks modern and attractive (and, crucially, is more secure and resilient). Prior to its launch, I updated all of the content. Since July, I have produced a note to accompany each inspection report as it is published, and have also used the new website to post an open ‘call for evidence’ at the start of each new inspection, which has begun to encourage contributions from a wider range of stakeholders and interested parties.

As an Inspector, I have no powers to direct. I rely on the Home Office recognising that my reports are evidence-based, that criticisms are intended to be constructive, and that recommendations are sensible. Maintaining effective working relationships with the Home Office is therefore another key objective. In 2017-18, from my perspective, this was largely achieved. I believe I enjoyed a good, straightforward relationship with ministers and senior Home Office officials, with whom I met quarterly to discuss specific inspections, plans, issues etc. At the working level, while there were occasional 'rubbing points', overall inspectors and inspected worked well together.

Looking ahead, I have updated my 3-Year Inspection Plan (2017-18 to 2019-20)(see Appendix 4). The updated Plan does not contain a new Year 3. This is because my term as Independent Chief Inspector is due to end in April 2020, and it will be for my successor to decide his or her own priorities for 2020-21 and beyond. Meanwhile, my objectives for 2018-19 are essentially the same as for 2017-18, and are all focused on continuing to deliver an effective programme of inspections.

**David Bolt**  
**Independent Chief Inspector**  
**April 2018**

# Role and Remit

## Legislative Framework

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

The UK Borders Act 2007 empowers the Independent Chief Inspector to monitor, report on and make recommendations about all such functions, with the exception of those functions exercised at removal centres, short-term holding facilities and under escort arrangements. The latter are subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons or Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary (and equivalents in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

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

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



In addition, the legislation enables the Secretary of State to request the Independent Chief Inspector to report to her in writing in relation to specified matters. (Within the Inspectorate, these requests are referred to as “Home Secretary Commissions”.)

Section 51 of the UK Borders Act 2007 covers the inspection planning process, which includes the requirement to consult the Secretary of State when preparing a plan (in practice, the plan for the coming year).<sup>1</sup>

The legislation also requires the Independent Chief Inspector to prepare a plan for each inspection, describing its objectives and terms of reference, but also makes it clear that this does not prevent him from doing anything that is not mentioned in any plan. (A Protocol, agreed with the Home Office, defines responsibilities, processes, and timescales, both satisfying the legislation and ensuring that inspections proceed efficiently. The Protocol is reviewed annually.)

The Independent Chief Inspector is required to report in writing to the Secretary of State in relation to the performance of the functions specified. (In practice, this means submitting a detailed report for each inspection, plus an Annual Report.)

In 2014, the Secretary of State assumed control of the publication of inspection reports, deciding when to lay them before Parliament.<sup>2</sup> At that time, the Secretary of State committed to doing this within 8 weeks of receipt of the report, subject to both Houses of Parliament being in session.

Reports are published in full except for any material that the Secretary of State determines it is undesirable to publish for reasons of national security or where publication might jeopardise an individual’s safety. In such cases, the legislation permits the Secretary of State to omit the relevant passages from the published report.<sup>3</sup>

## Statement of Purpose

It follows from the legislation that the Independent Chief Inspector’s role is to use the evidence gathered during inspections to challenge inefficiency, ineffectiveness or inconsistency, but to do so constructively and with the aim of helping to bring about improvements. To provide the appropriate focus and approach to its work, the Inspectorate has therefore devised the following short Statement of 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.”

## The Inspection Process

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

The Inspectorate has developed a 3-stage process. This is tailored to fit each inspection, but is normally expected to take 100 days (20 weeks) from start to finish:

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<sup>1</sup> The 2018-19 Plan was shared with the Home Secretary at the end of March 2018. It was published on the Inspectorate’s website on 6 April 2018.

<sup>2</sup> As soon as they are laid in Parliament, inspection reports are published on the Inspectorate’s website, together with the Home Office’s formal response to the report and recommendations.

<sup>3</sup> In 2017-18, 1 report, ‘An inspection of the review and removal of immigration, refugee and citizenship “status” (April-August 2017)’ contained a redaction, which was marked as such. This was made for reasons of national security.

### Stage 1: Planning

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

### Stage 2: Inspecting

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

### Stage 3: Reporting

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







# Inspection Findings 2017-18

## Overview

20 inspection reports were laid in Parliament in 2017-18. They are listed at Appendix 1. The full reports can be found on the Inspectorate's website, together with the Home Office's formal responses to the reports and to each of the recommendations.

The 20 reports contained 91 recommendations, of which the Home Office accepted 62 (68%), partially accepted 23 (25%) and rejected 6 (7%).

A summary of the key findings from each inspection is provided below.

Inspectors do not set out to find fault, but since the Inspectorate's purpose is to help to bring about improvements, it is perhaps inevitable that inspection reports are weighted towards what is not working well.

There were some positives, however. As in previous years, it was notable that the vast majority of Home Office staff and managers encountered by inspectors were responsible and committed. While morale was an issue in some places, it was often because staff were frustrated by "the system", which they felt prevented them from doing their best.

In terms of border security, inspections again showed that fixed-point immigration controls at major ports and airports were essentially effective, though target times for queue management continued to be longer than port operators and carriers considered acceptable from a commercial perspective, and the increasing reliance on ePassport gates raised questions about how Border Force should configure its supporting functions.

Meanwhile, some familiar concerns persisted: for example, poor record keeping; the failure of first-line Quality Assurance processes to identify and correct errors; and gaps and errors in data collection and management information. While these systemic weaknesses remain, it will be hard for the Home Office to satisfy the Inspectorate and others that misgivings about overall decision quality, and about senior management awareness of pressure points and "backlogs", are misplaced.

A number of inspections again pointed to the need for better internal communications about priorities and expectations, and better coordination between different parts of the Home Office involved in similar or related functions.

However, the greatest cause for concern was not a particular function or failing but the overall capacity and capabilities of the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS). In 2016-17, inspectors had found evidence of the responsible directorates mobilising quickly to respond to new or emerging threats, although last year's Annual Report also noted that resources were already fully committed and prioritising a new threat involved hard choices and came at a cost to existing work.

In 2017-18, several of the business areas inspected appeared to be at full stretch and toiling to manage their current workloads. While in some cases the problem was exacerbated by old and unsuitable IT, which the Home Office is at various stages of updating or replacing through its 'transformation' programmes, the more pressing worries were the staffing gaps, shortages of skills and experience, and the inability to recruit, train and replace staff quickly enough.

During 2017-18, questions were asked by the Home Affairs Committee and others about the capacity and capabilities of BICS, particularly staff numbers, because of the additional demands that are expected to flow from the UK's exit from the European Union. Partly for this reason, but primarily because it is fundamental to the efficiency and effectiveness of all borders and immigration functions, in 2018-19 the Inspectorate will examine all aspects of BICS workforce planning, both overall and in relation to specific business areas.

## **Summary of findings from 2017-18 inspections**

The 2017-18 Inspection Plan was set out under 5 'Themes', reflecting the main purpose or outcome of the Home Office's various borders and immigration functions. This format is followed below. In practice, several of the inspections touched on more than one theme.

### **Theme 1: Protecting the border (identifying and intercepting risks and threats)**

3 inspections had 'protecting the border' as their main theme.

#### **An Inspection of Border Force operations at east coast ports (July-November 2016)**

This inspection looked at Border Force's operations along the east coast, focusing on the major seaports between the Thames Gateway and northern Scotland. It examined the efficiency and effectiveness of immigration and customs controls at these ports, but also considered Border Force's coverage of smaller ports, harbours and marinas. It looked specifically at Border Force's identification and handling of clandestine arrivals, in light of recent activities in northern France to increase border security and close down migrant camps, and the reported displacement of clandestine traffic to the east coast. The inspection also examined Border Force's use of intelligence, and threat and risk assessments, about migrant movements and the movement of prohibited and restricted goods.

The inspection found that Border Force, given the practicalities, was generally efficient and effective in managing the fixed immigration control points at the major seaports, and in dealing on an intelligence-led basis with vehicle and freight arrivals. By contrast, coverage of smaller ports, harbours and marinas was poor. The numbers of clandestine arrivals identified by Border Force at east coast ports had indeed increased, and Border Force was dealing appropriately with individuals, whether they claimed asylum or agreed to be removed immediately. The overall sense was that Border Force was stretched, in some instances too thinly, but coping.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 1 February 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 12 July 2017. It made 9 recommendations, 6 were accepted and 3 partially accepted.

The recommendations were grouped under 4 themes: direction versus discretion; resourcing and equipping of seaports and maritime functions; remedial actions specific to the east coast; and General Maritime (GM).

Over the next 1-2 years, the Inspectorate will look at Border Force operations at south and west coast seaports, including Border Force's use of its cutter fleet, and will expect to see evidence that the recommendations made in this report that are relevant to these other areas have been implemented.

### **An inspection of Border Force operations at Gatwick Airport (South Terminal) (September-December 2016)**

Gatwick is the UK's second largest airport. In 2012, the Inspectorate published a report on Gatwick (North Terminal). This inspection therefore focused on Gatwick (South Terminal). It examined the efficiency and effectiveness of Border Force immigration and customs operations, taking note of the findings and recommendations from recent inspections of Heathrow Airport (2015 and 2016) and Manchester Airport (2016), and at the issues highlighted in the inspection of Gatwick (North Terminal). It also took note of the Border Force Operational Assurance Directorate's 'Spot Check' of Gatwick completed in March 2015.

As at mid-2016, Border Force had a permanent headcount of 550 staff at Gatwick Airport, supported by mobile officers deployed at Gatwick when required, plus a contingent of seasonal workers it could call upon to manage increased passenger numbers during busier periods.

The inspection found that Border Force was performing well against the national Service Level Agreement (SLA) for managing passenger queues at the immigration controls, and in the vast majority of cases was processing them in compliance with its Operating Mandate. However, it was overly reliant on mobile and seasonal staff to maintain this level of performance. Overall, Border Force operations at Gatwick appeared to be under considerable strain, with some groups of staff feeling undervalued. This was particularly true of those involved in customs work, although customs seizures in 2016 were higher than in the previous 2 years, which Border Force management ascribed to a major restructuring of its Detection Business Area.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 10 March 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 12 July 2017. It made 17 recommendations for improvement, some of which were relevant beyond Gatwick. These fell under 5 headings: the Border Force resourcing model at Gatwick Airport; safeguarding; customs controls; record keeping and assurance checks; and intelligence.

Of the 17 recommendations, 10 were accepted and 6 partially accepted. One recommendation was rejected. This related to ensuring that there was a visible Border Force presence in the customs channels for all high-risk flights.



## **An inspection of Border Force operations at Stansted Airport (September-November 2017)**

Stansted is the UK's fourth largest airport (after Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester) and Europe's busiest single terminal airport. In the year to September 2016, it handled 24 million passengers (arrivals and departures).

Stansted airport was last inspected in 2013. Since then, there have been inspections of Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester airports. The findings and recommendations from these previous inspections informed the scope of this inspection, the focus of which was Border Force's immigration and customs functions at Stansted. This included the use of ePassport gates. In June 2016, the number of ePassport gates went from 15 to 30 gates, which at that time was more than any other UK airport.

Stansted's owners, Manchester Airport Group (MAG), are planning to make extensive improvements to the airport, including constructing a second terminal building. The intention is to have one terminal for arrivals and another for departures, which will be unlike any existing UK airport. These plans were not explored in detail as, at the time of the inspection, they did not materially affect Border Force's current operations. As the plans develop, Border Force's preparations and readiness to respond to the major changes they will entail are a likely topic for a further inspection.

During this inspection, as is customary, inspectors spent time at Stansted observing Border Force in action, and interviewing and holding focus groups with staff. The report reflects the views they expressed. It also reflects the views of Border Force management, informed by the results of the most recent (2017) People Survey. It is fair to say that these views differ substantially on some key points.

Whether the People Survey results are a more reliable indicator of staff engagement than the views expressed to inspectors, which is Border Force's contention given that two-thirds of Stansted staff responded to the Survey, the comments made to inspectors pointed to the fact that Border Force management had more to do to connect with some members of its Stansted team.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 1 February 2018 and was laid in Parliament on 28 March 2018. It contained 9 recommendations for improvement, 5 of which were accepted fully and 4 in part. Those in relation to communication and the provision of training were most relevant in terms of further improving staff engagement at Stansted

## **Theme 2: Providing a service (processing applicants, claimants and customers)**

5 inspections had 'providing a service' as their main theme.

### **A short inspection of the Home Office's application of the good character requirement in the case of young persons who apply for registration as British citizens (February-April 2017)**

This inspection looked at how the Home Office interpreted "good character" in the case of young persons applying for registration as British citizens. In particular, it looked at whether the guidance made available to caseworkers was appropriate.

British citizens enjoy important rights, including the right to live, work and study in the United Kingdom, to apply for a British passport, and to access state benefits and services.



The British Nationality Act 1981 ('the Act') makes provision for children (those under the age of 18) who do not automatically acquire British citizenship at birth to apply for registration as British citizens. Applicants meeting certain conditions are legally entitled to registration, others may be granted registration at the Home Secretary's discretion.

In the latter case, applications from young persons (defined in the Act as "a person who has attained the age of 10 years at the time when the application is made") "must not be granted unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that" the "young person is of good character." Adults (those over 18) apply for naturalisation rather than registration, but the same legislation applies in relation to good character.

The inspection found that Home Office policy had tightened in relation to the good character requirement since December 2012, so that young persons were now subject to the same guidance as adults. In part, this was in response to a recommendation from the Inspectorate's 2014 Nationality Casework inspection. However, the unintended consequence of the latter was that lengthy bans from applying for citizenship imposed on anyone found to be not of good character prevented some young persons from applying and being considered while still a minor.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 10 May 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 13 July 2017. It made 2 recommendations for improvement, both related to a further review of the guidance and both were accepted.

### **An inspection of entry clearance processing operations in Croydon and Istanbul (November 2016-March 2017)**

Each year, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) processes approximately 3 million applications for clearance to enter the UK. For almost a decade, UKVI has been consolidating decision making in respect of these applications into a reducing number of Decision Making Centres (DMCs) or 'hubs' (there were 16 at the time of the inspection), with the aim of improving quality and consistency of decision-making, improving efficiency and productivity, and achieving greater resilience and flexibility.

This inspection examined UKVI's delivery in each of these areas, as well as its performance in terms of customer service, which is a keystone of its vision and mission statements. It also considered the effect of 'onshoring' decisions into DMCs in the UK (either Croydon or Sheffield).

The inspection looked specifically at the efficiency and effectiveness of UKVI's entry clearance operations in Croydon and Istanbul, focusing on applications for settlement in the UK and applications to enter as a family visitor.



The most important finding was that first-line quality assurance of decisions and decision notices needed to improve, especially in Croydon, which had operated for many months with a significant shortfall in Entry Clearance Managers (ECMs). To achieve its "world class customer service" mission statement, UKVI needed to ensure that DMCs had sufficient ECMs, with the required experience and skills, not just to identify and correct errors but to provide decision makers with regular, constructive feedback, so that the quality of initial decisions would be continuously improved.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 25 May 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 13 July 2017. It made 5 recommendations for improvement, 3 of which were accepted, and 2 partially accepted.

### **An inspection of asylum intake and casework (April-August 2017)**

This inspection looked at the asylum process from registration of a claim through to the initial asylum decision, taking in the timeliness and quality of decisions. It also looked at the progress made by the Home Office in implementing the improvements recommended in the previous inspection of asylum casework in 2015 (published on 4 February 2016) and the 2016 inspection of 'lorry drops' (published 21 July 2016).

The Home Office devotes significant numbers of staff and other resources to managing asylum claims, and successive inspections have shown that the vast majority of the staff are committed and hard working. Nonetheless, this inspection again found that the Home Office was struggling to keep on top of the volumes of claims it received.

In 2016-17, the Asylum Intake and Casework (AIC) unit's challenge was not made easier by a large turnover in staff (particularly decision makers), by lengthy staffing gaps, and by high levels of inexperience once new staff were recruited. In this, it was not helped by the Home Office's HR policies and practices, which give managers little control over staff departures and are laborious and slow for those trying to backfill vacancies.

Together with the abstraction of staff in autumn 2016 to deal with children cleared from the Calais camps, these staffing difficulties affected AIC's performance. The inspection found that the number of claims awaiting an initial decision rose during the year, as did the proportion deemed "non-straightforward" and therefore set outside the published service standard of 6 months for a decision. The inspection found issues with quality as well as with timeliness.

The Home Office described the asylum system as "in transition", and had plans to transform it and enable it to cope better with peaks in demand. These included the 'Next Generation Casework' project, aimed at reducing the numbers of "non-straightforward" claims and developing and testing new ways of working. However, because of delays in staffing it, the project was not sufficiently advanced at the time of the inspection to demonstrate its value.

The key message from the inspection was that the Home Office needed to accelerate its transformation plans and put itself in effective control of the asylum process as soon as possible. Otherwise, the next peak in asylum intake, or trough in staffing levels, would see it fall further behind.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 25 September 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 28 November 2017. It made 7 recommendations for improvement, 6 of which were accepted, and one partially accepted.

### **An inspection of how the Home Office considers the 'best interests' of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (August-December 2017)**

The UK's treatment of asylum seeking children is a matter of considerable public interest. This inspection looked specifically at the Home Office's handling of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and in particular at how it ensured that the 'best interests' of the child were properly considered throughout the asylum process. This included how those interests were met

for those children transferred from one Local Authority area to another under the National Transfer Scheme.

This inspection was the second in an intended series of inspections focused on the treatment of children by the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System. The first report, published in July 2017, dealt with the Home Office's application of the good character requirement in the case of young persons who apply for registration as British citizens.

This 'best interests' inspection also sits alongside the Home Office's Asylum Intake and Casework report, published in November 2017, and was informed by a specially-commissioned literature review in relation to children's rights and 'best interests'.<sup>4</sup>

The previous inspection of the handling of asylum applications from unaccompanied children, in 2013, contained 9 recommendations, covering: consistency of treatment; family tracing; timeliness of asylum decisions; performance targets; development of statistics; data quality/record-keeping; quality of refusal letters; consistency of initial interviews; and referrals to the Refugee Council. The Home Office accepted all 9 recommendations, and "closed" them all between October 2013 and May 2016, having satisfied itself that it had taken the necessary actions.

This latest inspection showed that it now needed to revisit most of these areas and make improvements that stick. In addition, the Home Office needed to make improvements in relation to the National Transfer Scheme, in how it communicates with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and stakeholders, and in the use of 'UASC leave'.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 7 February 2018, and was laid in Parliament on 28 March 2018. It contained just 2 recommendations, although each was broken down into several parts. The Home Office accepted one recommendation fully, and the other in part.

Overall, the inspection revealed that there was a considerable amount of work for the Home Office to do. Given the impact the asylum system has on the lives of those children and young people who come into contact with it, it must be hoped that the Home Office can move quickly to make the necessary improvements.



### **A re-inspection of Border Force's identification and treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery (September-November 2017)**

The original inspection report was published in February 2017. It contained 12 recommendations for improvements to the way Border Force identified and treated potential victims of modern slavery. These followed 4 key themes: record keeping and data collection; training for Border Force officers; decision making and managing effective outcomes; and, partnership working and awareness raising. The Home Office accepted 9 of the 12 recommendations, and partially accepted the other 3.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/literature-review-home-office-treatment-of-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children>.

This re-inspection examined what progress Border Force had made since the original report. As before, this work was carried out in cooperation with the UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

The re-inspection found that Border Force had done a considerable amount of work towards implementing the recommendations, and that 7 of the 12 recommendations could now be considered “closed”, albeit in some cases, for example in relation to staff training, Border Force needed to ensure that it maintained the position it had achieved.

In the case of the other 5 recommendations, particularly those focused on improving record keeping and data collection, there was insufficient evidence that the work that had been done had been effective, and some improvements that were in train needed speeding up. These 5 recommendations therefore remained “open”.

The re-inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary on 30 January 2018 and was laid in Parliament on 28 March 2018. It contained no new recommendations.

### **Theme 3: Compliance Management and Enforcement**

5 inspections had ‘compliance management and enforcement’ as their main theme.

#### **An inspection of the Home Office’s Reporting and Offender Management processes (December 2016-March 2017)**

The Inspectorate’s first 3-Year Inspection Plan, published in April 2016, indicated an intention under Theme 3 to inspect ‘Contact management: Reporting arrangements, including Reporting Centres’ in 2018-19. In June 2016, the Home Secretary asked the Independent Chief Inspector if he would bring this piece of work forward to the latter part of 2016-17.

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Home Office’s Reporting and Offender Management (ROM) system, focusing on its understanding and management of the reporting population, and the implementation of policy and guidance relating to the management of absconders.

The inspection looked at whether reporting events were effective in moving cases towards conclusion, including how Reporting Centres were encouraging voluntary departures, carrying out interviews to progress Emergency Travel Document (ETD) applications, working with partners to resolve barriers to removal, and supporting enforced removals by detaining individuals upon reporting.

The inspection found that Home Office guidance was clear that reporting events must have some value beyond compliance, but the volumes made this extremely difficult, and this was compounded by poor internal communication and coordination. The way non-compliance with reporting restrictions was recorded and treated was inconsistent, and there was little evidence that effective action was being taken to locate the vast bulk of absconders.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 24 May 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 2 November 2017. It made 6 recommendations for improvement, grouped under 3 headings: achieving the stated purpose of the ROM system; concluding cases; and, managing non-compliance. All 6 recommendations were accepted.



## **An inspection of the Home Office's management of non-detained Foreign National Offenders (December 2016-March 2017)**

Failure to remove Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) from the UK has long been the subject of parliamentary and public concern. From time to time, that concern intensifies because an FNO who has been released from prison commits a serious crime.

In August 2016, 2 Turkish FNOs were convicted of the murder in the UK of a third man, and were sentenced to life imprisonment. The Home Office conducted an internal investigation that sought to identify lessons and recommend improvements. From this, the relevant Home Office managers developed a list of action points.

In June 2016, the Home Secretary asked the Independent Chief Inspector if he would carry out an inspection to assess the improvements made following the internal investigation.

This inspection therefore examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Home Office's management of FNOs, focusing on the progression of cases involving non-detained FNOs towards their removal from the UK, and with particular reference to the actions taken from 2016 onwards. The inspection ran in parallel with the inspection of the Home Office's Reporting and Offender Management (ROM) system (see above), since FNOs form part of the overall reporting population.

The monitoring of non-detained FNOs is a challenging business, as is their removal from the UK. It carries risks for public protection, and for the Home Office staff involved there are regular frustrations. The inspection identified the need for a number of improvements, including completion of the work begun in 2016. While these improvements would not change some of the underlying risks, they were important in ensuring that processes were as efficient and effective as they could be.



The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 21 June 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 2 November 2017. It made 8 recommendations for improvement, concerning completion of the work begun in 2016; record keeping in relation to FNOs; guidance and training; and, joined-up working within and between the relevant Home Office business areas. Of these, 6 were accepted, one partially accepted and one rejected. The rejected recommendation concerned analysis and monitoring of re-offending rates, which the Home Office argued would partly duplicate work done by the Ministry of Justice.

## **An inspection of the review and removal of immigration, refugee and citizenship "status" (April-August 2017)**

Granting a person Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK, or refugee status, or British nationality, confers important rights, specifically the right to live in the UK lawfully and, in the case of British citizenship, the unrestricted right to enter the UK. Once granted, the removal of any of these forms of "status" is a serious step, with profound consequences for the individuals affected.

While different mechanisms exist for removing a person's status, depending on the grounds for doing so, with different terms to describe the act itself: "revocation", "cancellation", "cessation" and "deprivation", they all result in the individual becoming liable to removal from the UK, or to being refused entry if outside the country at the time.

3 business areas are responsible for reviewing cases and deciding (or recommending to the Home Secretary) that a person's status be removed. Each deals with different categories of persons: foreign national offenders (Criminal Casework); persons posing a threat to national security (Special Cases Unit); and, anyone with ILR, refugee status, or British nationality (Status Review Unit). Each business area sits under a different Home Office Director General.

The inspection looked at the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes for reviewing and removing a person's status, at how cases were identified for review, how they were progressed, and at decision quality. It also looked at record keeping, the collection, use of data and management information.

The inspection found that there was little or no communication between the 3 business areas, with no sharing of 'best practice' or lessons learned, and nothing in place to ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of relevant legislation and policies. Overall, the inspection identified significant room for improvement, particularly within the Status Review Unit, which had by far the largest caseload and which had already recognised the need for change. It was hoped that the inspection report would give the unit's efforts added impetus.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 9 October 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 30 January 2018. It made 5 recommendations for improvement, 4 of which were accepted, and one partially accepted.

The Home Secretary decided that some material should be omitted from the published version of this report for reasons of national security, as she is empowered to do under Section 50(3)(a) of the UK Borders Act 2007. This did not materially affect the understanding of the overall findings or recommendations.

### **An inspection of the "Right to Rent" scheme (August-December 2017)**

The Immigration Act 2014 introduced a range of "hostile environment" measures (since renamed "compliant environment" measures by the Home Office). The government used the Immigration Act 2016 to extend a number of these.

The "hostile environment" measures relating to driving licences, to bank and building society accounts, and to sham marriages were the subject of inspection reports published at the end of 2016. The intention was to look at all of the measures in due course.

This inspection focused on the measures introduced in relation to residential tenancies. These were aimed at preventing "persons disqualified by immigration status" from renting accommodation. The key difference between the "Right to Rent" (RtR) scheme and the measures inspected earlier was that, instead of government agencies, officials or institutions, it relies on compliance with the 'new' legislation by private citizens, that is landlords (plus letting agents or sub-letters).

Under the 2014 Act, landlords are required to carry out "reasonable enquiries" to establish that prospective tenants have the "right to rent" before agreeing to lease them premises "for residential use". The 2016 Act introduced a criminal offence of knowingly leasing a property to a disqualified person, with a sentence of up to 5 years imprisonment, or fine, or both. It also included powers to enable landlords to terminate tenancies where the tenant is a disqualified individual.



Overall, the inspection found that the RtR scheme had yet to demonstrate its worth as a tool to encourage immigration compliance, with the Home Office failing to coordinate, maximise or even measure effectively its use, while at the same time doing little to address the concerns of stakeholders.

### An inspection of exit checks (August - December 2017)

The re-introduction of exit checks, which had been phased out in the 1990s, was announced in 2010 in the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition's 'Programme for government'. The Home Office subsequently committed to delivering "100% exit checks" by March 2015. However, the Home Affairs Committee, reporting in early 2015, expressed concerns that this would not be achieved and highlighted that a number of significant exclusions had crept into the government's pledge.

The inspection looked at what data was being collected, the gaps and what was being done to fill them, and at what the Home Office was able to achieve from its analysis of the data it had.



Overall, the sense was that the Home Office had over-promised when setting out its plans for exit checks, and then closed the Exit Check Programme prematurely, declaring exit checks to be “business as usual” when a significant amount of work remained to be done to get full value from them.

This work needed better coordination within the Home Office, and externally with carriers, with other potential contributors to and users of the data, and with Common Travel Area partners. In the meantime, the Home Office needed to be more careful about presenting exit checks as the answer to managing the illegal migrant population, which for now remained wishful thinking.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 30 January 2018 and was laid in Parliament on 28 March 2018. It contained one overarching recommendation: that the Home Office re-establishes the Exit Checks Programme, with appropriate Programme oversight, governance and documentation, to drive the improvements needed in data quality and completeness and to coordinate and encourage its effective operational use. There was also a need to refresh and restate the ‘vision’ for exit checks, and reset expectations.

The Home Office rejected the recommendation, but stated that work was “already underway, under alternative governance structures that have already been established to continue to address the substantive issues that have been raised by the ICIBI.”

#### **Theme 4: Working with others**

While ‘working with others’ featured in a number of the inspection reports published in 2017-18 there were none where this was the main theme. However, in February 2018 the Inspectorate began work on ‘An inspection of partnership working between the Home Office and other government departments’. The inspection report should be published in the first half of 2018-19.

#### **Theme 5: Learning and improving**

7 inspections had ‘learning and improving’ as their main theme, including 4 re-inspections.

##### **A re-inspection of the Tier 4 curtailment process (November 2016-January 2017)**

The original inspection report on the Tier 4 Curtailment Process was published on 23 March 2016. It made 9 recommendations, of which the Home Office accepted 6, partially accepted 2, and rejected one.

This re-inspection examined the Home Office’s progress in making the improvements it committed to making in its response. It also looked at the partially accepted and rejected recommendations to see if the concerns that led to these persisted.

In the case of the rejected recommendation, which referred to the publishing of service standards for the curtailment consideration process, these concerns had in fact intensified due to the size (c.25,000) and age (5 months plus) of the ‘Work in Progress’ (WiP) queue at the time of the re-inspection, and the severely scaled back resources allocated to this work. The re-inspection report therefore asked the Home Office to reconsider its original response.

Allowing the WiP to grow had been a conscious decision based on priorities, and the Home Office argued that as it was aware of the size, age and makeup of the WiP, and as there were systems in place to report against it and expedite any urgent cases, it was therefore under control. However, the inspection concluded that the WiP was too large and too far behind,

affecting sponsors, students and follow-up actions, and that this would not have been tolerated had published service standards been in place.

The original report recommended that the Home Office should “Take the necessary steps to identify and locate those individuals amongst the c.71,000 curtailment not pursued (CNP) cases decided between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2015 who have remained in the UK illegally, with a view to effecting their removal.” This recommendation was accepted.

At the time of the re-inspection, the 71,000 had been reduced to 24,995 through a series of data matching exercises. However, there had been no directly related enforcement activity, and no clear timescale for completing the checks. Consequently, the inspection criticised the Home Office’s approach for lacking urgency, a view that the Home Office strongly disputed.

The re-inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary on 1 March 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 12 July 2017. It contained no new recommendations. It acknowledged that the Home Office had made progress in a number of areas, for example improving communication with sponsors and quality assuring the sifting out of notifications, and concluded that 4 of the 8 accepted or partially accepted recommendations could be considered “closed”.

But, 4 recommendations remained “open”, and overall the re-inspection found that a good deal more work was required to achieve the improvements that the original report had identified were needed, and urged the Home Office to ensure that this work was properly prioritised and the necessary resources made available to deliver these improvements.

### **A re-inspection of the complaints handling process (January-March 2017)**

‘An inspection of the Handling of Complaints and MPs’ Correspondence’ (July – September 2015) was published on 1 March 2016. It contained 8 recommendations. The Home Office accepted 6 and partially accepted 2.

How well a public body handles complaints about the service it provides, or about the conduct of its staff, is rightly regarded as a key measure of its performance, and has a significant impact on public perceptions of its work. Monitoring and making recommendations about the handling of complaints is a named function of the Independent Chief Inspector within the UK Borders Act 2007.

This re-inspection examined the Home Office’s progress towards making the improvements it had committed to make in its response to the March 2016 report. It also looked at how the Home Office learned lessons from complaints to drive improved performance.

Of the original 8 recommendations, the re-inspection found that only 3 could be considered “closed” for all 3 of the directorates inspected (Border Force, UK Visas and Immigration, and Immigration Enforcement). The other 5 remained “open” for one or more directorate.

The re-inspection found that complaints handling by the UK Visas and Immigration’s Central Correspondence Team, and by Immigration Enforcement’s Detention Services Customer Service Unit, had improved. Both had made significant changes to their processes in line with the original recommendations. However, Border Force had a good deal more work to do to bring its complaints handling up to the required level of performance.

The re-inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary on 2 May 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 12 July 2017. It made no new recommendations, but encouraged the Home Office



to take the necessary actions to enable the original recommendations to be closed as soon as possible, noting that complaints handling, including lessons learned, would feature as a standing item in future inspections wherever relevant.

### **An interim re-inspection of Family Reunion applications received at the Istanbul Entry Clearance Decision Making Centre (December 2016-March 2017)**

‘An inspection of family reunion applications’ was published in September 2016. It contained 10 recommendations, all of which the Home Office accepted. Collectively, they were aimed at helping the Home Office to reassure applicants, stakeholders and others that it recognised the particular challenges surrounding family reunion applicants, and that it managed applications not just efficiently and effectively, but thoughtfully and with compassion.

For the original inspection, inspectors visited and examined applications received at Amman, Pretoria and Istanbul. These 3 decision making centres (DMCs) were chosen because they received the highest number of applications and also made most refusals.

Between November 2016 and March 2017, the Inspectorate carried out an inspection of entry clearance operations in Croydon and Istanbul. This provided an opportunity to check on the progress made in Istanbul towards implementing the 7 relevant recommendations from the family reunion report. (Of the original 10 recommendations, 2 were for UKVI to implement rather than individual DMCs, and one related to Amman’s historic handling of applications from Kuwaiti Bidoons).



The re-inspection found that Istanbul had improved its handling of family reunion applications. For example, there were no longer delays in obtaining copies of asylum screening and interview records; evidence was retained or referenced in issue notes or refusal notices, and decisions explained; “General grounds for refusal” was being used correctly; “exceptional circumstances” or “compassionate factors” were being considered; and, customer service standards were being met, or cases were appropriately marked as “complex”.

However, in 2 areas there appeared to have been little movement. These were access to interpreters to enable interviews of applicants to clarify points of detail, and the commissioning and funding of DNA tests. Interviews and DNA evidence have the potential to tip the ‘balance of probabilities’ argument, but the Home Office’s default position still seemed to be to refuse applications rather than to defer a decision to obtain best evidence, which was inefficient and could be traumatic for applicants.

As it was limited to Istanbul, and the case sample was small, this was an “interim” re-inspection, with all 10 recommendations remaining “open” pending a more extensive re-inspection.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 26 May 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 13 July 2017. The re-inspection report made no new recommendations.

### **A re-inspection of the Administrative Review process (January-March 2017)**

The original inspection of the arrangements created by the Immigration Act 2014 to replace the right of appeal to the Immigration and Asylum Tribunal for certain types of immigration decision with an internal Home Office administrative review process was published on 26 May 2016.

The requirement for this inspection was set out in section 16 of the 2014 Act, which specified that it should address the effectiveness of administrative reviews in identifying and correcting case working errors, and the independence of persons conducting the review in terms of their separation from the original decision maker. In addition, the inspection examined customer service standards, consistency across different Home Office directorates, organisational learning and cost savings.

The Home Office had created a separate, dedicated team for in-country applications, while overseas and 'at the border' reviews were being done locally, making separation of reviewer and original decision maker harder to evidence. Overall, the inspection found that significant improvements were needed in identifying and correcting case working errors, and in communicating decisions to applicants.

The report made 14 recommendations, grouped under 4 headings: the processing of applications for administrative review; consideration of cases; quality assurance; and, organisational learning. The Home Office accepted 13 of the recommendations, and partially accepted one.

This re-inspection examined what progress had been made in implementing the recommendations. It found that the handling of in-country reviews had improved considerably, but progress with overseas and 'at the border' reviews had been slower. Of the 14 recommendations, 6 could be considered "closed".

However, the Home Office was not yet able to demonstrate that it had delivered an efficient, effective and cost-saving replacement for the previous appeals mechanisms. This was made more difficult because administrative reviews were split across 3 business areas, and while the re-inspection report made no new recommendations the Home Office was asked to consider appointing a senior responsible owner for the overall system of administrative reviews to ensure consistency and benefits realisation.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 23 May 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 13 July 2017.

### **An inspection of Country of Origin Information (March 2017 Report)**

Country of Origin Information (COI) has a key role in asylum decision making. Guidance from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) explains that knowledge of conditions in an applicant's country of origin is an important element in assessing their credibility and evaluating statements made by them, and ultimately in determining whether they qualify for protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention. The UK's Immigration Rules recognise this and refer to "reliable and up-to-date information" being made available to those responsible for examining applications and taking decisions.

Section 48 (2)(j) of the UK Borders Act 2007 (“the Act”) places a responsibility on the Independent Chief Inspector to “consider and make recommendations about ... the content of information about conditions in countries outside the United Kingdom which the Secretary of State compiles and makes available, for purposes connected with immigration and asylum, to immigration officers and other officials”.

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) is a panel of experts and practitioners, created in 2009 to assist the Independent Chief Inspector with this task by advising on the content and quality of COI products.

This report covered the reviews considered and signed off by the IAGCI at its March 2017 meeting. The reviews were of COI products for Albania, Bangladesh, Egypt and Sri Lanka (topics listed at Appendix 2). These countries and topics were chosen because they were last reviewed by IAGCI in 2012 (Sri Lanka) or 2013 (Albania, Bangladesh) or not at all (Egypt), and because of the numbers of asylum applications and high refusal rates in 2016.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 11 May 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 13 July 2017. In addition to the recommendations for additions, deletions and amendments within the body of the COI products reviewed, which were detailed in the report together with the Home Office’s responses, there were 2 overarching recommendations. These concerned distinguishing more clearly between country information and policy in the Guidance section of its Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs), and clarifying the ‘legal test’ used to assess the availability of state protection for particular individuals and groups.

The Home Office accepted both recommendations, but with the rider that it believed it already complied with them, and consequently there was no need for any action. The Independent Chief Inspector did not share this view.

### **An inspection of the Home Office’s production and use of Country of Origin Information (April-August 2017)**

The value of independent assurance through IAGCI of the information contained in specific COI products is recognised by the Home Office, and by stakeholders in the UK and overseas. However, IAGCI’s reviews of COI content do not address the efficiency and effectiveness of the functions that produce and use COI.

This inspection therefore examined the commissioning, development and dissemination of COI products, and at their use, particularly within the asylum process, which was the subject of a parallel inspection.

The inspection found that COI producers (since 2014, the Country Policy and Information Team) had made some efforts to engage the main users of their products, and COI products had been made shorter and topic-specific as a result. But, much more needed to be done to create effective feedback loops, to understand and satisfy demand for specific COI, and to train asylum decision makers in how to use COI. With such a small team of COI producers, brigaded under a separate Director General from the asylum caseworkers, it was difficult to see how this would be realised.

However, the inspection identified a more fundamental problem with COI, and one requiring urgent attention. To achieve the purpose set out by UNHCR and recognised in the Immigration Rules, COI must be not only “reliable and up-to-date”, but must also be presented in a way that permits decision makers to reach their own objective judgements and decisions on individual applications. As currently constructed, the Home Office’s COI products did not do this.



As their title implied, Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs) combined country information and “Policy”. This was wrong in principle and, whatever the intention, the effect was to direct the user towards a predetermined outcome, particularly where a significant body of asylum decision makers were inexperienced, unfamiliar with COI, had insufficient time to master every detail, and were likely to interpret anything labelled “Policy” as something they were required to follow.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 23 October 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 30 January 2018. It contained 7 recommendations, of which 4 were accepted, one was partially accepted, and 2 were rejected. The latter included the key recommendation regarding use of the term “policy”, with the Home Office suggesting in its formal response that it saw this as interchangeable with “analysis”, “guidance” or “country position”, missing the very point the report was making. However, it did recognise that the term may be misinterpreted and committed to making it clear that that part of the CPIN “provides an analysis of the COI”.

In light of the findings from this inspection and the Home Office’s responses, the Inspectorate will continue to work with IAGCI to ensure that the information contained in particular COI products is as reliable, up-to-date and complete as possible, but it will also ensure that any future inspections of asylum casework examine how decision makers are using COI.

### **An inspection of the Home Office’s mechanisms for learning from immigration litigation (April-July 2017)**

It is important that the Home Office, with support from the Government Legal Department (GLD), is efficient and effective in its management of litigation claims made against the decisions and actions of its Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) business areas. In addition to being an opportunity to acknowledge errors and provide appropriate remedies to claimants, the costs of processing and defending cases are substantial, as are the sums paid out to settle claims, and in compensation when cases are lost. There are also risks to the Home Office’s reputation and functioning if claims are handled poorly and result in adverse judgements.

Between 2004 and 2013, the number of Judicial Reviews raised against the Home Office increased seven-fold. In 2013, the Home Office’s Legal Strategy Team (LST) produced a document entitled ‘Litigation – Blueprint for a Target End to End Process’. This ‘Blueprint’ recognised that learning “should be used to identify improvements and refine our processes, or suggest actions to other units to improve the handling of litigation.”

This inspection focused on the mechanisms the Home Office had put in place since 2013 to manage litigation claims, and to capture and use the learning from litigation to improve the way claims are handled and, as far as possible, to reduce the number of future claims and associated costs through better (“right first time”) decision making.

The bulk of the Pre-Action Protocol letters, Judicial Reviews, and Private Law Claims received that relate to BICS business areas are managed by Litigation Operations. The inspection found that since its creation in 2013, and particularly in the last 2 years, Litigation Operations had made various process improvements and, at the time of the inspection, was looking to build on these.

The inspection identified room for further improvements in the processing of claims, as well as the need for clearer communication to decision makers in other units about litigation outcomes to avoid the same issues giving rise to repeated claims.

With regard to costs, the inspection found that the budgets for legal costs and compensation payments were overspent in 2016-17, which raised concerns about the Home Office’s ability to

control its expenditure in this area. The equivalent budgets were planned to reduce by almost a fifth in 2019-20. This will require an exceptional level of cost saving efficiencies, and the inspection found no evidence to support such optimism.

Ultimately, the actions of claimants and the Courts were not within the Home Office's control. However, to have greater influence over the costs and other consequences of litigation it needed to make a more deliberate and determined organisational effort to learn lessons from the claims it received, and to apply these systematically to initial decision making as well as to the management of claims.

This report made 7 recommendations, of which the Home Office accepted 5, and partially accepted 2. The recommendations included formalising, and possibly extending, the involvement of GLD; creating a closer and more structured working relationship between Litigation Operations and decision-making business areas; enhancing Litigation Operations' analytical capabilities; reviewing performance targets; and aligning the responsibility for deciding which claims to settle or defend with budget allocations and financial authorities.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 24 November 2017 and was laid in Parliament on 30 January 2018.

### **'Live' inspections as at 31 March 2017**

7 inspections that began in 2017-18 were at various stages of completion at 31 March 2018:

- An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, report sent to the Home Secretary on 7 March 2018
- An interim re-inspection of family reunion applications received at the Amman Entry Clearance Decision Making Centre, report sent for factual accuracy check on 23 March 2018
- An inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports, began in February 2018
- An inspection of the Home Office's identification and treatment of non-detained vulnerable adults, began in February 2018
- An inspection of partnership working between the Home Office and other government departments, began in February 2018
- An inspection of asylum accommodation, began in February 2018
- An inspection of Country of Origin Information, began in March 2018

# Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

## Purpose

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

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was established in 2009 by the Chief Inspector, with the purpose of advising him about the content and quality of country of origin (COI) information and guidance notes produced by the Home Office and relied upon by decision makers.

## How IAGCI works

IAGCI works as follows:

- **Stage 1:** Taking account of the volume of asylum claims in relation to particular countries and of when particular COI products were last reviewed, the Chair of IAGCI proposes to the Independent Chief Inspector which countries/products should next be reviewed by the Group.
- **Stage 2:** Independent reviewers, typically academics with relevant knowledge and expertise, are commissioned to review the products and to recommend amendments (additions, deletions, clarifications), citing their evidence. (The Inspectorate manages the tendering process and funds the reviews, and the Independent Chief Inspector has to sign off on IAGCI’s recommended reviewer from those replying to the tender.)
- **Stage 3:** IAGCI quality assures the submitted reviews and sends them to the Home Office unit responsible for producing COI material (the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) for it to consider and respond to the reviewer’s recommendations.
- **Stage 4:** IAGCI (with the Independent Chief Inspector) holds a meeting with CPIT and the reviewers to go through the reviews and to consider, in particular, any points of disagreement.
- **Stage 5:** Where the meeting identifies that these are required, IAGCI commissions any further inputs from the reviewer, before signing off the reviews as complete.
- **Stage 6:** The Independent Chief Inspector produces a covering report with his recommendations, and send this, with the IAGCI reviews and the CPIT responses, to the Home Secretary to be laid in Parliament in the normal way.

## Membership

Membership of the IAGCI is by invitation of the Independent Chief Inspector. It is voluntary and unpaid. Members are respected academics and representatives of organisations with a working interest in country information and how it is used by the Home Office.

### List of members 2017-18

Chair:

- Dr Laura Hammond (School of Oriental and African Studies)

Independent members:

- Dr Mike Collyer (Sussex University)
- Dr Ceri Oeppen (Sussex University)
- Dr Patricia Daley (Oxford University)
- Dr Nando Sigona (University of Birmingham)
- Dr Julie Vullnetari (University of Southampton)
- Professor Giorgia Dona (University of East London)

Representative members:

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

## Meetings

IAGCI aims to meet 2 or 3 times a year. However, having met on 27 March 2017, there were no meetings in 2017-18, while the Inspectorate carried out a wider examination of the production and use of COI. The report, 'An inspection of the Home Office's production and use of Country of Origin Information (April – August 2017)', was sent to the Home Secretary on 23 October 2017, and laid in Parliament on 30 January 2018. IAGCI subsequently commissioned a new round of reviews in March 2018 and scheduled a meeting for May 2018.

## Published reviews

A list of the country of origin products reviewed during 2017-18 is at Appendix 2.

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

# Working with others

## Stakeholders

Inspection reports and recommendations are addressed to the Home Secretary and are aimed primarily at the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) business areas, in particular Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration.

However, the immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions performed by and on behalf of the Home Secretary involve and affect a wide range of other bodies, and touch everyone living in or seeking to visit the UK. To inform individual inspections and the overall inspection programme, as well as engaging effectively with the Home Office, it is therefore essential that the Inspectorate reaches out to these "stakeholders" to understand their many perspectives, interests and concerns and to capture relevant evidence.

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

## Established fora

The Independent Chief Inspector chairs 3 established stakeholder groups that meet periodically, each of which shares the same terms of reference:

- to inform and advise the Independent Chief Inspector regarding any issues of interest or concern to members or those they represent
- to assist the Independent Chief Inspector with the 3-Year Inspection Plan by proposing topics for inspection and advising on their relative importance and urgency
- to assist the Independent Chief Inspector with the scoping and evidence collection for individual inspections

The Refugee and Asylum Forum (RAF) was created in 2009. Its membership consists mostly of third sector organisations with an interest in and knowledge of the Home Office's work in connection with refugees and asylum seekers and related issues. In 2017-18, there was one RAF meeting. In addition, as well as the usual bilateral exchanges with RAF members as part of the standard process for individual inspections, in 2017 the Inspectorate introduced 'workshops' at the pre-scoping stage of certain inspections, inviting RAF members and others to attend and share their knowledge and help to shape the inspection.

The Aviation Stakeholder Forum was created in 2011. Membership consists of UK airport and airline operators. During 2017-18, there was one meeting of the Aviation Stakeholder Forum, plus ad hoc contact with various members. Meanwhile, inspectors and the Independent Chief Inspector visited Stansted and Cardiff airports. In the case of Stansted, this was in the course of an inspection. In the case of Cardiff, it was at the invitation of the airport operator, with a view to informing 2018-19's Inspection Plan.

The Seaports Stakeholder Forum was also created in 2011. Membership consists of UK seaports and shipping organisations. During 2017-18, the Seaports Stakeholder Forum met once, shortly before inspectors embarked on an inspection of south coast seaports, the scope of which included extensive stakeholder engagement.

Membership and Minutes of meetings for all 3 groups are available on the Inspectorate website.

Looking ahead to 2018-19, the Inspectorate's aim is to engage the members of all 3 groups in more regular dialogue, rather than relying on formal meetings, and to extend the range of contacts in these and other relevant areas. This includes enlisting the help of stakeholders to speak directly with the Home Office's "customers" where it will help with an inspection. For example, in 2017-18, the Children's Society arranged for inspectors to meet a group of unaccompanied asylum seeking children to hear their views about their treatment and their 'best interests'.

## Website

Another way of reaching out to stakeholders and to the wider public, including "customers" of the Home Office's immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions, is through the Inspectorate's website.

In July 2017, the Inspectorate's website migrated to GOV.UK. The new website looks modern and appealing. Crucially, it is more secure and resilient. Prior to launch, all of the content was updated, and since July each inspection report has been published with a covering statement from the Independent Chief Inspector. Meanwhile, the new website has been used to post a 'call for evidence' at the start of each new inspection, and this has begun to encourage contributions from a wider range of stakeholders and individuals.

## Collaborations with other Inspectorates and similar bodies

Throughout 2017-18, the Inspectorate has continued to look for ways to work with other Inspectorates and similar bodies, in the spirit of the National Audit Office's (NAO) 2015 recommendations regarding consistency of approach and collaboration between the Inspectorate and the 4 Criminal Justice Inspectorates.<sup>5</sup>

Because of our different statutory remits and priorities, the opportunities for joint inspections are limited. However, in December 2017, the Inspectorate was able to support Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) by deploying an inspector to Guernsey to assist with an inspection of police functions, which had recently expanded to include immigration and customs responsibilities. There is the possibility of a similar collaboration in 2018-19 involving Jersey.

Through 2017-18, the Inspectorate continued its dialogue with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) regarding the latter's work in the immigration detention estate, and with Home Office Internal Audit, to share findings and to ensure that overlaps between audits and inspections are avoided. In November 2017, the Independent Chief Inspector met the relevant directors from the NAO for similar discussions.

The Inspectorate continued to enjoy a close relationship with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC), Kevin Hyland, and his team, by virtue of our shared accommodation. In 2017-18, this included IASC inputting into the re-inspection of Border Force's identification and

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<sup>5</sup> 'Inspection: A comparative study' - report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, 11 February 2015

treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery (PVoMS).<sup>6</sup> It also meant that the Inspectorate could be confident about postponing an inspection of the in-country (Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration) identification and treatment of PVoMS from 2018-19 to 2019-20, in light of the NAO's report 'Reducing Modern Slavery', published in December 2017.

In June 2017, the Independent Chief Inspector provided evidence to an enquiry into the situation of separated and unaccompanied minors in Europe sponsored by the Human Trafficking Foundation and led by the Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart MP and Lady Butler-Shloss GBE, Co-Chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Trafficking and Modern Slavery. The report was published in July 2017, noting that the Inspectorate planned to look at unaccompanied asylum seeking children later in the year.

Also in June 2017, the Independent Chief Inspector was invited to speak at a seminar on 'Compassion: Immigration and Asylum Law' organised by the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies.

In September 2017, Stephen Shaw began a follow-up review of his 2016 report 'Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons'. The Inspectorate has had a number of meetings with Stephen and his team, including to discuss the best timing for the planned inspection of the Home Office's treatment of vulnerable adults who are not in detention. Work on this inspection began in February 2018.

In December 2017, the Independent Chief Inspector sat as the independent member of the interview panel to appoint a new Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

Opportunities for international collaborations are rare. However, in February 2018, the Inspectorate received a visit from the Secretariat for the Independent Review of the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board. The review was launched in 2017 with the objective of identifying options and recommending approaches to achieving greater efficiencies and higher productivity with respect to the processing of asylum claims. The visitors were particularly interested in hearing about the findings from the inspection of asylum intake and casework, published in November 2017, and from the inspection of the 'best interests' of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, which was with the Home Secretary awaiting publication.

## Home Affairs Committee

The Independent Chief Inspector appeared before the Home Affairs Committee in November 2017, the first time since December 2015. The Committee's report '3rd Report – Home Office delivery of Brexit - Immigration' including the Independent Chief Inspector's evidence was published in February 2018.

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<sup>6</sup> The original inspection report was laid in Parliament on 2 February 2017. The re-inspection report was laid on 28 March 2018.





# Resources and planning

## Budget and Staffing 2017-18 and 2018-19

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

The total budget for 2017-18 was £2.1m, the same as for 2016-17. The budget for 2018-19 remains unchanged at £2.1m.

'Pay Costs' (staff salaries and employer's pension and National Insurance contributions) account for the bulk of this. In 2017-18, £1.87m (89%) was designated for 'Pay Costs', with £232k allocated to 'Non Pay'. There was no allocation for Capital expenditure.<sup>7</sup>

The Inspectorate recorded an overall underspend of £321k (15%) in 2017-18, of which £214K was 'Pay Costs' – see 'Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2017-18' at Appendix 3.

The agreed headcount for 2017-18 was 30 full-time equivalents (FTEs). The Inspectorate began 2017-18 at full strength, having recruited 10 new inspectors and a Senior Civil Servant Chief of Staff between January and March 2017.

While 2017-18 saw less staff "churn" than the previous year, by the end of the business year 8 members of staff had left (one on retirement, 3 on promotion, one on completion of a short-term attachment, one on special leave to join their spouse on an overseas posting, and 2 on level transfers after completing 3+ years in the Inspectorate). Meanwhile, one inspector went on maternity leave, and 2 more were absent for extended periods for health and family reasons.

As a result, the Inspectorate operated at between 80-90 % of its funded strength across the year, and by March 2018 the effective strength was down to roughly two-thirds. While the Inspectorate achieved its primary objective for the year, to deliver the inspection plan, this was a stretch, and is a credit to the hard work of all those involved. Meanwhile, the reduced staff numbers had an inevitable knock-on effect on expenditure on travel and other non-pay items and explains the underspends.

During 2017-18, the Inspectorate ran 4 recruitment campaigns, using Civil Service Recruitment. These were slow and labour-intensive. They produced 129 applications, but just 3 new recruits, and one internal promotion. By the end of March 2018, one of the 3, the only successful applicant from the September 2017 campaign, was still not in post, because of delays in the vetting process, despite the fact that he was a serving civil servant already cleared to a higher level than that required by the Home Office. In April 2018, he withdrew, having secured another post at a higher grade.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Since 2016-17, the Inspectorate's accommodation costs have been met directly by the Home Office.

<sup>8</sup> ICIBI follows the Civil Service recruitment process and all Inspectorate staff (except the Independent Chief Inspector) are employed by the Home Office. All staff are cleared to Security Check (SC) level, with a small number, plus the Independent Chief Inspector, cleared to Developed Vetting (DV) level.

## Outlook and Plans 2018-19 and 2019-20

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

At the end of 2017-18, the Inspectorate was making ready to launch a new recruitment campaign, open to external candidates and existing civil servants on secondment. However, it is likely that the Inspectorate will find itself under strength for at least the first half of 2018-19.

For planning purposes, each 'standard' inspection is assumed to require 350 working days (the elapsed time from the start of the inspection to delivery of the finished report to the Home Secretary is 100 days/20 weeks). Re-inspections and some more tightly scoped inspections may require fewer resources and be completed more quickly.

## Updated 3-Year Inspection Plan

The first rolling 3-Year inspection plan was published in 2016 (previously, the Independent Chief Inspector had published an annual plan that identified a number of 'announced' inspections and made a commitment to completing a further number of 'unannounced' inspections, the latter providing a degree of flexibility to deal with topics that might become of interest during the year).

The aim of the 3-Year plan was to provide a better sense of the overall shape and range of the Inspectorate's work programme, how planned inspections fitted together thematically, and to signpost when particular topics would be examined.

Because of the time inspections take to complete, plus the time between reporting to the Home Secretary and the report being laid in Parliament, some inspections will straddle 2 business years. The plan reflects when the work will start.

An updated inspection plan for 2018-19 and 2019-20 is at Appendix 4. There is no new Year 3 (2020-21), as the Independent Chief Inspector's term of office is due to end in April 2020, and it will be for whoever is appointed next to decide what to inspect in 2020-21.

While the updated plan is owned entirely by the Independent Chief Inspector, it has taken into account the views of Ministers, officials, and stakeholders, and the wider public, who were invited through the Inspectorate website to have their say. It is also informed by the inspections completed in 2017-18 and in previous years.

The original (April 2017) plans for 2018-19 and 2019-20 received a good deal of support from stakeholders, so the updated version has tried to accommodate new ideas for inspection topics or angles by amending the timing or scope of what was planned while leaving as much of the original plans as possible intact.

The April 2017 version of the 3-Year Plan was published before the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. As at April 2018, it remained to be agreed how in detail this will affect the UK's borders and immigration functions. Therefore, space has been created within the updated plan for various 'Brexit'-related pieces of work, the precise shape and timing of which are not yet fixed.

## Training and Development

There is no accredited training course dedicated to inspecting. Previously, the Inspectorate adopted the CMI Level 7 (Postgraduate) 'Certificate in Professional Consulting' as the 'best fit', and all of the then inspectors who wished to complete this course had done so by the middle of 2016. However, while most staff found this useful, it did not help them to develop some of the core skills required to be effective inspectors.

The staff who joined the Inspectorate at the beginning of 2017 followed a 2-month bespoke induction programme, developed and first used with the October 2016 intake. This covered the basic knowledge and skills required by inspectors, progressing step by step through the inspection process, with the 'trainees' attached to a 'live' inspection at key points to work alongside more experienced inspectors and gain practical experience.

Towards the end of 2017-18, the Inspectorate identified the Certificate in Operational Delivery (Level 5) as a better fit in terms of the skills needed to be a fully competent inspector, in particular the identification, analysis and presentation of data and information. The Certificate includes several management units, which will also be of value to inspectors when they move on, which in most cases is to another post within the Home Office and for many is on promotion. The aim is to offer this training to all existing staff, and to mandate it for all inspectors who join after 1 April 2018.

## Vision Statement

The Inspectorate has developed a 'Vision Statement' that is intended to sit alongside its stated Purpose (see 'Role and Remit').

The Inspectorate will:

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

## Values

The Inspectorate adheres to the Civil Service values:

- integrity
- honesty
- objectivity
- impartiality

## Diversity

Inspectorate staff are employed as permanent Home Office civil servants.<sup>9</sup> By agreement with the Independent Chief Inspector, those recruited from elsewhere become Home Office civil servants on joining the Inspectorate.

As at 31 March 2018, the staff profile was:<sup>10</sup>

- 46% male, 54% female
- Age bands
  - 25-34 21%
  - 35-39 37%
  - 40-44 21%
  - 45+ 21%
- 35% minority ethnic, 65% white
- 42% married, 58% not married
- 21% disabled, 79% non-disabled
- 52% other religions, 48% Christian
- 50% with caring responsibilities, 50% with no caring responsibilities
- 12% part-time, 88% full-time
- 69% flexible working pattern, 31% non-flexible working pattern

## Continuous improvement

The Inspectorate is continuously looking for ways to improve its processes and professionalism. To this end, after a trial-run in the second half of 2017, an Inspection, Research and Support Team (IRST) was formally established in January 2018. IRST was given responsibility for 'horizon scanning', for conducting initial research and providing analytical support for inspections, and for debriefing inspections, and obtaining feedback and identifying lessons. Though still relatively new, by the end of 2017-18 IRST was already adding value, particularly in 'kick-starting' inspections by providing inspection teams with background briefing material and references.

In 2017-18, the Inspectorate also began a major overhaul of the ICIBI Handbook (which sets out the principles and processes by which inspections are conducted), looking to incorporate recognised standards for audits, reviews, and inspections. This work will complete in 2018-19.

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<sup>9</sup> The Independent Chief Inspector is a public appointee.

<sup>10</sup> Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Based on Home Office criteria and self-reporting. Breakdown not provided where a category has fewer than 5 employees. From the data collected by the Home Office, the only category affected was sexual orientation.

# Appendix 1: Inspection Reports published in 2017-18

- A re-inspection of the Tier 4 curtailment process (November 2016-January 2017), published 12 July 2017
- A re-inspection of the complaints handling process (January-March 2017), published 12 July 2017
- An inspection of Border Force operations at east coast ports (July-November 2016), published 12 July 2017
- An inspection of Border Force operations at Gatwick Airport (South Terminal) (September-December 2016), published 12 July 2017
- An interim re-inspection of Family Reunion applications received at the Istanbul Entry Clearance Decision Making Centre (December 2016-March 2017), published 13 July 2017
- A short inspection of the Home Office's application of the good character requirement in the case of young persons who apply for registration as British citizens (February-April 2017), published 13 July 2017
- An inspection of Country of Origin Information (March 2017 Report), published 13 July 2017
- An inspection of entry clearance processing operations in Croydon and Istanbul (November 2016-March 2017), published 13 July 2017
- A re-inspection of the Administrative Review process (January-March 2017), published 13 July 2017
- An inspection of the Home Office's Reporting and Offender Management processes (December 2016-March 2017), published 2 November 2017
- An inspection of the Home Office's management of non-detained Foreign National Offenders (December 2016-March 2017), published 2 November 2017
- An inspection of asylum intake and casework (April-August 2017), published 28 November 2017
- An inspection of the review and removal of immigration, refugee and citizenship "status" (April-August 2017), published 30 January 2018
- An inspection of the Home Office's production and use of Country of Origin Information (April-August 2017), published 30 January 2018
- An inspection of the Home Office's mechanisms for learning from immigration litigation (April-July 2017), published 30 January 2018
- An inspection of Border Force Operations at Stansted Airport (September-November 2017), published 28 March 2018
- An inspection of how the Home Office considers the 'best interests' of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (August-December 2017), published 28 March 2018
- A re-inspection of Border Force's identification and treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery (September-November 2017), published 28 March 2018

- An inspection of the “Right to Rent” scheme (August - December 2017), published 28 March 2018
- An inspection of exit checks (August - December 2017), published 28 March 2018



## Appendix 2: Reviews of Country Information 2017-18

Published 13 July 2017

### **Albania**

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Ethnic Minority Groups (October 2016)
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (December 2016)

### **Bangladesh**

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Minority Religious Groups (March 2016)
- Opposition to Government (February 2015)

### **Egypt**

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Christians (November 2016)
- Muslim Brotherhood (August 2016)

### **Sri Lanka**

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Tamil Separatism (August 2016)
- Journalists, Media Professionals and Human Rights Activists (September 2015)



## Appendix 3: Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2017-18

Account	Pay/Cost Code	Spend
Pay Costs - Recurring	Pay & Allowances Pay Remit	1,274,118
	Premia Payments	1,108
	Overtime	1,808
	Pay & Allowances Other	(5,586)
	Superannuation	238,191
	ERNIC	144,749
<b>Pay Total</b>		<b>1,654,387</b>
Other Income		(1,057)
	Fees	341
	Other Costs	5,949
	Research	11,000
	Interpreter/Translator	106
	Major Contracts	53
Special Payments		7
Contracted Out Services		(12,745)
IT & Comms		2,269
Estates		51
AT Conferences		7,330
Training & Recruitment		25,938
AT Office Supplies & Services		27,636
AT Travel Subsistence		57,421
<b>Non Pay Total</b>		<b>124,299</b>
<b>Resource Total</b>		<b>1,778,686</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1,778,686</b>



## Appendix 4: Updated 3-Year Inspection Plan 2017-18 – 2019-20

Theme 1: Protecting the border (identifying and intercepting risks and threats)					
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018
Intelligence	<p>A re-inspection of the Intelligence Functions of Border Force and Immigration Enforcement (published 21 July 2016)</p> <p>Possible re-inspection in 2017-18 or 2018-19</p>				<p>2018-19: Progress check on the development of the Single Intelligence Platform</p> <p>2019-20: Possible re-inspection, to include the work of the National Border Targeting Centre</p>
Customs Controls	<p>An inspection of Border Force operations at Coventry and Langley postal hubs (March - July 2016) was published 13 October 2016</p> <p>Possible re-inspection in 2017-18</p>				2018-19: 'Light-touch' re-inspection of the original recommendations
	Border Force Freight operations			●	2019-20: Inspection scope and timing subject to agreement on the handling of freight after the UK's exit from the EU
Visa applications (crossover with Theme 2)	Visa Decision Making Centre(s) - focusing on the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of UKVI's visa operations	○	●	●	<p>2017-18: Inspection of Croydon and Istanbul published July 2017</p> <p>2018-19: Inspection of "onshoring" of decision making to Croydon and Sheffield</p> <p>2019-20: To be decided</p>

UK Seaports and coastline	An inspection of Border Force operations at east coast seaports was published on 12 July 2017  Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2017-18: Re-inspection of recommendations incorporated into south coast ports inspection
	West Coast Ports (to include people and goods entering the UK via the Common Travel Area)		●		2019-20: Deferred from 2018-19; timing subject to agreement on the CTA arrangements after the UK exits the EU
	South Coast Ports (to include Dover)	●			2017-18: Inspection began in January 2018, due for publication mid-2018
	The Border Force Cutter Fleet	○	»	»	2017-18: Inspection deferred due to recent Border Force Operational Assurance Directorate review  2019-20: Possibly include in overview inspection of seaports, incorporating re-inspection of recommendations from previous inspections
	The National Maritime Intelligence Centre (NMIC) – a standing item in Ports and Cutter Fleet inspections	»	»	»	2017-18: NMIC included in scope of south coast ports inspection
UK Airports	Immigration and customs controls of scheduled international flights	○	○	○	2017-18: Inspection of Gatwick (South) published July 2017; Inspection of Stansted published March 2018  2018-19 and 2019-20: Programme of inspections of Border Force resourcing at regional UK airports, including service levels
Border security partnerships	Juxtaposed controls			●	2019-20: Inspection scope and timing subject to agreement on the arrangements for juxtaposed controls after the UK's exit from the EU



## Theme 2: Providing a service (processing applicants, claimants and customers)

Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018
Immigration routes	An inspection of family reunion applications (January – May 2016) was published 14 September 2016  Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2018-19: Re-inspection of family reunion applications, focusing on Amman DMC, due for publication Q1 2018-19  2018-19 or 2019-20: Re-inspection of Pretoria Entry Clearance Decision Making Centre
	Asylum casework	●		●	2017-18: Asylum Intake and Casework inspection published November 2017  2019-20: As originally planned, with a possible interim inspection of the Asylum 'new model' office (Bootle) in 2018-19
	Points Based System (PBS) visa applications – a standing item in all Visa Post inspections, plus an inspection focusing on treatment of a particular Tier(s) across the system in 2018-19	»	●	»	2018-19: Inspection of "Brexit preparedness", focusing on resourcing and processes for the registration and settlement of EU nationals  2019-20: To be decided, but possibly to include Intra-Company Transfers
	Administrative Reviews  An inspection of the Administrative Review Processes introduced following the 2014 Immigration Act (Sept – Dec 2015), published 26 May 2016			○	2017-18: Re-inspection published July 2017  2019-20: Follow-up to 2017 re-inspection, to include an examination of benefits realisation

Routes to citizenship	Nationality casework – registration of children as British citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981	○			2017-18: ‘Good character’ inspection published July 2017  2018-19: ‘Light touch’ re-inspection
	An inspection of the General Register Office for England and Wales, with particular emphasis on birth records (March – June 2016), published 13 October 2016  Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2019-20: ‘Light touch’ re-inspection of 2016 recommendations
	Abuse of UK marriage laws for immigration purposes, including marriage fraud				2018-19 or 2019-20: Possible ‘new’ topic for inspection
Identification and treatment of vulnerable individuals	Children (including the exercise of S. 55 safeguarding duties and ‘best interest’ judgements) – treatment of children will be a standing item in all relevant inspections	●	»	»	2017-18: ‘Best interests’ inspection published March 2018  2018-19: Inspection of the safeguarding of children and young people departing the UK  2019-20: Possible ‘best interests’ re-inspection
	Potential Victims of Modern Slavery (in collaboration with the Office of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner) – focusing on in-country identification and treatment  An inspection of Border Force’s identification and treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery was published 2 February 2017–possible re-inspection in 2017/18		●		2019-20: Deferred from 2018-19, as ‘in country’ covered by NAO in ‘Reducing Modern Slavery’, published December 2017.  2017-18: Re-inspection of ‘at the border’ identification and treatment published March 2018

	Immigration detainees, including the handling of further submissions and the provision of bail accommodation – aligned with HM Inspectorate of Prisons’ inspection programme, where possible			●	2019-20: As originally planned; scope likely to include some or all of: follow-up actions from the 2018 Shaw Review; availability of post-detention accommodation; application of the Adults at Risk policy; policy, training and practice in relation to Medico-Legal reports/ medical evidence
	Vulnerable adults, including identification and treatment victims of torture – a standing item in all relevant inspections  Domestic Workers visa route	○	»	○	2017-18: Inspection began in January 2018, due for publication mid-2018  2019-20: Scope to be decided, but may include processes for determining “no recourse to public funds”
	Women (gender bias) – a standing item in all inspections, plus a themed inspection in 2018-19	»	○	»	2017-18: Pregnant women is a focus of the Asylum Accommodation inspection, begun January 2018, due for publication mid-2018  2018-19: As planned; scope to take account of findings of Asylum Accommodation inspection
	Particular social groups – a standing item where relevant, and forming part of the Asylum casework inspection in 2017-18	»	»	»	2018-19 or 2019-20: Inspection to focus on treatment of LGBTI
Service Levels	Service standards (and internal targets) – a standing item in all inspections	»	»	»	2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned
	Charging for services – covered in relevant inspections, plus a system-wide inspection of in 2018-19		○	»	2018-19: As originally planned; scope to include value for money and fee waiver criteria

	<p>Complaints handling will be a standing item in all inspections</p> <p>A re-inspection of Complaints Handling, published on 12 July 2017</p>	»	»	»	<p>2017-18: Re-inspection published in July 2017</p> <p>2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned</p>
Syrian Refugee Programme	Progress towards the agreed targets and lessons learnt	●			<p>2017-18: Report completed March 2018, due to be published Q1 2018-19</p> <p>2019-20: Possible re-inspection</p>

### Theme 3: Compliance Management and Enforcement

Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018
Clandestine entrants	<p>A short notice inspection of the Home Office response to 'Lorry Drops' was published 21 July 2016</p> <p>Possible re-inspection in 2017-18</p>				2019-20: Incorporate re-inspection into Clandestine Entrants inspection (below)
	Clandestine entrants – identification and handling			●	2019-20: As originally planned
'Hostile environment'	<p>Checking of immigration status within civil registration processes – see also Theme 2 'Routes to citizenship'</p>				2018-19: Possible 'light touch' re-inspection
	<p>An inspection of the 'hostile environment' measures relating to driving licences and bank accounts (January – July 2016) was published 13 October 2016</p> <p>Possible re-inspection in 2017-18</p>				2019-20: Include re-inspection in Overview

	<p>An inspection of the implementation of the 2014 'hostile environment' provisions for tackling sham marriage was published 15 December 2016</p> <p>Possible re-inspection in 2017-18</p>				2019-20: Include re-inspection in Overview
	Landlord immigration checks	●			<p>2017-18: 'Right to Rent' inspection published March 2018.</p> <p>2019-20: Include re-inspection in Overview</p>
	National Health Service charging	○			2018-19: Inspection deferred from 2017-18, due to insufficient ICIBI capacity
	Illegal working		●		2018-19: As originally planned, or possibly to begin in Q1 2019-20
	Status reviews - An inspection of the review and removal of immigration, refugee and citizenship "status" was published on 20 January 2018	○			2019-20: Possible 'light touch' re-inspection
	Overview of 'hostile environment' measures			○	2019-20: Timing as originally planned, but likely to be a bigger piece of work than envisaged
Contact management	<p>An inspection of reporting arrangements, including the work of Reporting Centres, published on 2 November 2017</p> <p>Reporting arrangements, including Reporting Centres</p>			●	<p>2017-18: Inspection brought forward (at the Home Secretary's request), published November 2017</p> <p>2019-20: Re-inspection</p>

	'Helplines' (and published guidance)		○		2018-19: As originally planned, or possibly to begin in early 2019-20
Removals	An inspection into failed right of abode applications and referral for enforcement action, published 13 October 2016  Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2019-20: Possible 'light touch' re-inspection
	An inspection of Removals, focusing on Foreign National Offenders, published on 2 November 2017				2017-18: Inspected (at the Home Secretary's request), report published November 2017.  2019-20: Re-inspection
	Migration Removals Pool (MRP), Voluntary Returns, Family Returns, and Emergency Travel Documents (last inspected 2015)		●		2019-20: Defer from 2018-19 and combine with the Overview of 'hostile environment' measures
Exit checks	Exploitation of exit check data across the border and immigration systems (including planning and implementation of Exit Check project), included as a standing item where relevant from Year 2	●	»	»	2017-18: Inspection published March 2018  2019-20: Re-inspection
Sanctions and Penalties	Completeness, consistency of application, deterrent effect of sanctions and penalties (including, but not limited to, the 'hostile environment' measures above), a standing item where relevant	»		○	2019-20: As originally planned



Theme 4: Working with others					
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018
'Hand-offs' between Home Office Directorates	Alignment of border and immigration processes and priorities – a standing item for all inspections, plus an inspection of any 'new' major processes at an early stage, plus an inspection of HM Passport Office and/or General Register Office in Year 2 where there functions overlap or join border and immigration functions	»	●	●	2018-19: Defer HMPO/GRO/UKVI overlap inspection to focus on preparations for the UK's exit from the EU and the consequences for BICS 'business as usual'  2019-20: To be decided, possibly re-instate HMPO/GRO/UKVI overlap inspection
	Forecasting, planning, contingency planning - a standing item for all inspections, plus a re-inspection of the planning for (and management of) a summer 2016 asylum 'surge' under Theme 5	»	»	○	2018-19: Bring forward from 2019-20 and run alongside workforce planning inspection (see Theme 5)
	'Onshoring' (to the UK) of immigration functions and remote decision-making	○			2017-18: Deferred due to delays in roll out  2018-19: Inspection of "onshoring" of decision making to Croydon and Sheffield (see under Theme 1); to include document handling between overseas posts and UK Decision Making Centres.
Partnerships	Other Government Departments (OGDs) and Local Authorities – alignment of priorities and responsibilities, information sharing, plus a comparison of similar functions e.g. DWP, HMRC processing of bulk data, contact management	●			2017-18: Inspection began February 2018, due for publication mid-2018

	Law Enforcement – information sharing and collaborative working		●		2019-20: Deferred from 2018-19; to include a re-inspection of Operation NEXUS.
	Overseas partners and stakeholders – relationship management, information sharing, comparative performance			●	2019-20: As originally planned, possible focus on Immigration Enforcement International (formerly RALON)
Commercial contracts	National/strategically significant (Home Office ‘Tier 1’) contracts – performance/delivery management, alignment with in-house border and immigration functions		●		2017-18: Asylum Accommodation inspection (begun in January 2018, due to be published mid-2018) – brought forward from 2018-19 in response to Home Affairs Committee report
	Regional or Local (‘Tiers 2 and 3’) contracts – Home Office visibility, plus performance/delivery management	●			2019-20: Deferred from 2017-18 to make room for Asylum Accommodation inspection (above); possibly to include NGO contracts
	Overseas contracts, for example Visa Application Centres (VACs) – a standing item in all Visa Decision Making Centre inspections		»	»	2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned
‘Joint’ Inspections	Collaborations with other Inspectorates and similar bodies (including short-term attachments, input to inspections and, where relevant, joint or complementary inspections)	○	○	○	<p>2017-18: ICIBI supported HMICFRS inspection in Guernsey</p> <p>2018-19: Possible support to HMICFRS inspection in Jersey</p> <p>2019-20: To be decided</p>

Theme 5: Learning and improving					
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018
Country of Origin Information	Country of Origin (COI) Reviews – 10-12 reviews per year focused on the countries and issues featuring most commonly in asylum claims – reviews commissioned and quality assured by the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information	○	○	○	2017-18: See Annual Report  2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned
	Production, usefulness and use made of COI material within the Home Office – to include an assessment of the ICI's process for delivering COI reviews	●			2017-18: Inspection published January 2018  2019-20: Re-inspection in parallel with Asylum Casework inspection, meanwhile monitor through COI reviews
Litigation	Handling of litigation cases, including the work of Presenting Officers – inspection combined with Organisational Learning	●			2017-18: Inspection published January 2018, but Presenting Officers were set out of scope  2019-20: Inspection of the work of Presenting Officers
	Organisational learning from litigation cases, including Pre-Action Protocol (PAP) letters, Judicial Reviews, allowed appeals – then included as a standing item in relevant inspections		»	»	2017-18: See above  2018-19: Possible re-inspection of 2017-18 Learning from Litigation inspection
	Non-suspensive appeals – a standing item where relevant, plus a thematic inspection in 2019-20	»	»	○	2019-20: As originally planned

Staff	Type of staff (permanent, temporary, agency), grades/responsibility levels, provision of initial and refresher/top-up training, knowledge, experience, engagement – a standing item in all inspections	»	»		2018-19: Workforce planning across BICS ('right skills, right place, right time'), including for the UK's exit for the EU – a major piece of work requiring significant resources  2019-20: Re-inspection
Tools/ Technology	Operating Mandates, Instructions, Guidance, Quality Assurance – clarity, accessibility, use etc. – a standing item in all inspections, plus a thematic inspection in 2018-19	»	●	»	2018-19 (or early 2019-20): Inspection to complement the workforce planning inspection
	Data/Management Information, record keeping - a standing item in all inspections, plus a thematic inspection in 2019-20	»	»	●	2019-20: Inspection to include review of ATLAS implementation
	Digital services at the border - a standing item in relevant inspections, plus a thematic inspection in 2018-19	»	●	»	2018-19: As originally planned
Re-inspections	Check on the implementation of accepted Recommendations, after c. 6+ months or earlier if the Home Office has committed to an earlier implementation date – 6 re-inspections per year	●	●	●	2017-18: 5 re-inspections published; all other inspections incorporated re-inspection points where relevant  2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned

Home Secretary Commissions					
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018
Not known in advance	S. 50 of the UK Borders Act 2007 enables the Home Secretary to request the ICI to report in relation to a specified matter.	●	●	●	2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned (merge with planned inspections where possible)

### Key

- an inspection that is likely to require significant resources (for planning purposes estimated at 350 days) and take 20 weeks to complete
- an inspection that is likely to require more limited resources (for planning purposes estimated at 200 days) and may be completed in less than 20 weeks
- » a standing item that will be covered, where possible, in all relevant inspections











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