Home Office

The Home Office response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's report:

An Inspection of the Home Office's Network Consolidation Programme and the "onshoring" of visa processing and decision making to the UK

Date of inspection: September 2018 - August 2019

The Home Office thanks the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) for his report.

The Home Office is grateful to the ICIBI for the effort that he and his team have devoted to this inspection, and the attention which has been given to a wide range of complex and interrelated issues. Work is already underway to take forward the recommendations in this report.

The Department has accepted four of the ICIBI's recommendations. It has not accepted one.

The Home Office response to the recommendations:

The Home Office should:

1. **Confirm that the Network Consolidation Programme, and specifically the planned Phase 2 DMC closures, continues to enjoy ministerial support within the Home Office and, having done so, that it is fully understood by other government departments and other key stakeholders.**

1.1 **Accepted**

1.2 The Home Office will confirm continued Ministerial support for phase 2 of the Network Consolidation programme. Other government departments are aware of the changes proposed up to 2021. The Home Office is working closely with FCO colleagues to implement these changes. The Home Office will engage with other key stakeholders including in the tourism sector, so they understand the impact of the forthcoming consolidation moves.

2. **By the end of 2019-20, produce (at least in outline) proposals for Phase 3 of the Network Consolidation Programme covering further DMC closures/onshoring and timescales, and share this with affected staff and stakeholders as part of a revised and more inclusive communication and consultation strategy.**

2.1 **Not Accepted**

2.2 The Home Office agrees that any future network consolidation planning should be communicated to staff and key stakeholders in good time, as the ICIBI notes proposals for Phase 2 were. Phase 2 lasts until 2021 and there are no plans at present, even in outline, for Phase 3 of network consolidation. If this remains the case at the end of the 2019 – 20 financial year, there will be no proposals to share.

3. **Both for internal "benefits realisation" purposes and to evidence to stakeholders that standards have been maintained (or improved), ensure that sufficient data is collected for all future DMC closures/onshorings to enable a meaningful "before and after" comparison of operating costs (staff and staff-related costs, FCO charges, other costs) and performance (not solely against the Customer Service Standard but including some measurement of decision quality).**

3.1 **Accepted**

3.2 The Home Office will capture and analyse quantitative and qualitive data following a consolidation move and evaluate any changes to application numbers, issue / refusal rates, compliance rates and other performance indicators. Work has already started on this with completed and future consolidation changes being evaluated by Home Office economists and reviewed by the UKVI Transformation Board.

4. **Including as much detail as possible, publish an explanation of how the Streaming Tool works, avoiding jargon and opaque language, and establish an auditable review and assurance system that covers all three RAG ratings, using the outputs to build stakeholder confidence in the Streaming Tool and the way it is used.**

4.1 **Accepted**

4.2   The streaming tool was explained in detail by the then Immigration Minister, Caroline Nokes, at an [Adjournment Debate on 19 June 2019](#) and in her letter of 23 July 2019 to Chi Onwurah MP, which has been shared with the Home Affairs Select Committee and published in the House Library.

4.3   The streaming tool is based on the Equality Act, Nationality Risk Assessment (EANRA) Ministerial Authorisation list, which sets out a list of nationalities to which extra scrutiny can be lawfully applied. The streaming tool uses this nationality list as one of a number of objective criteria that are applied, in combination, to identify cases that should be given greater scrutiny. Those criteria include the Global Visa Risk Streaming (GVRS) data provided by Immigration Intelligence (II); and local, case specific, attributes identified in conjunction with Immigration Intelligence based on research they have conducted on a type of risk that has been identified at an Operational Review Meeting (ORM) held by II and UKVI (and as recorded in a decision log that is signed off at Regional Operations Manager level). Whilst UKVI recognises the desire for transparency this must be balanced with the integrity of immigration control; we do not intend to release further information about the methodology and data into the public domain, as to do so would provide a reference point for unscrupulous parties to actively manipulate the immigration system. Additionally, and of particular relevance to the Ministerial Authorisation list of nationalities, the release of this information would impact the effective conduct of the UK's bilateral relations and international engagement in the sensitive issues surrounding migration and border security and these datasets cannot be disclosed into the public domain as to do so would compromise that integrity and the effectiveness of immigration control.

5.   Publish on GOV.UK service standards and performance data for the VACs (in addition to anything published by the commercial partners themselves), covering availability of appointments, average waiting times, and any other factors affecting the "customer experience", together with any agreed improvement plans for particular VACs.

5.1   **Accepted**

5.2   The Commercial Partner Key Performance Indicators are already in the public domain via publication of the contract on Gov.UK. Average visa processing times are available on Gov.UK but are not in real time. Over the next few months UKVI will work with Commercial Partners and the Home Office - Performance Reporting and Analysis Unit to assure and publish more contemporaneous performance data along with other relevant information about the "customer experience".