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

An Inspection of the Home Office's use of language services in the asylum process

May - November 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 to tackle the issues in a strategic and co-ordinated way.

This has included the formulation of a working group that has collected and analysed Home Office wide interpreter data, ensured the Language Services were in contract and mapped individual and collective interpreter requirements. The progress thus far will provide a strong base to the work that will be taken forward by the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship (BICS) Language Services Owner, following deeper strategic assessment.

The Department has accepted all three of the ICIBI's recommendations.

The Home Office response to the recommendations:

The Home Office should:

1. **Appoint a BICS "owner" for language services, with accountability across BICS for the formulation and implementation of policies and processes, collection of data and performance monitoring, planning and delivery of the required resources and capabilities, risk management, internal and external communications, monitoring and management of contracted out services, and stakeholder engagement.**

1.1 **Accepted**

1.2 Work commenced as part of a BICS wide mapping exercise on the use of language services. In December 2019 the Second Permanent Secretary appointed a lead within UKVI who commissioned a dedicated working group to undertake the initial mapping and to take forward actions ahead of appointing an Official owner. This enabled the owner to conduct a deeper assessment and initiate improvement work ahead of the Chief Inspector's findings with work ongoing.

1.3 The improvement work focuses on policy, process improvement, data collation, performance monitoring, interpreter resource utilisation, interpreter capability, risk management, communications, commercial management and stakeholder engagement.

1.4 Key achievements so far include significant steps to improve the commercial aspects of language services, introducing a new interpreter database which will support data collation and assurance. We will be looking to deliver a revised Code of Conduct for interpreters which will be published in November 2020 on the GOV.UK website.

2. **Under the direction of the BICS "owner", create, publish and resource a comprehensive programme of improvements to the provision and use of language services, with clear timelines and deliverables. Drawing on the findings from this inspection, this should include the identification of urgent tasks and "easy wins" as well as longer-term projects.**

2.1 **Accepted**

2.2 We have a Programme to build in existing improvement work and deliver additional solutions that address the ICIBI's recommendations. The Programme is supported by detailed plans, covering a multitude of activities to improve structure and governance, technology, system innovation, quality assurance, data capture, performance, policy, customer experience, risk management, commercial, language resourcing and language industry mapping. A central team managing the work has been in place since the Spring 2020.

3. **Ensure that the risks and issues in relation to language services are fully and accurately reflected in the Risk Registers for the Home Office, for BICS, and for individual BICS directorates and business areas, and that mitigations and actions are regularly reviewed.**

3.1 **Accepted**

3.2 A language services risk register, and process has now been implemented. This will be reviewed by BICS wide stakeholder leads monthly, with an appropriate structure for escalation of risks being coordinated via the appointed deputy directors command.

3.3 A risk management lead has been appointed who will provide ongoing dynamic risk assessment of language services BICS wide to ensure consistency and greater governance of emerging risks. The lead will report emerging risks via an already established structure accordingly.