Home Office

The Home Office response to the Independent Chief Inspector's report:

An Inspection of Border Force Operations at Manchester Airport

July – October 2015

The Home Office thanks the Independent Chief Inspector (ICI) for this report.

Manchester is a fast-growing international airport, with annual passenger figures currently at 22 million, and expected to grow to 55 million by 2024. Border Force is implementing a planned programme of transformation and modernisation for the short and longer term to allow continued focus on border security and an improved approach to customer service and staff engagement. As part of this transformation we are working closely with the airport operator to improve the service we provide to the public, including through the greater use of automated gates. The transformation plan also includes an updated approach to staff recruitment, training and deployment.

Border Force is pleased that the ICI found that all checks required in the Border Force Operating Mandate were being conducted and that the relationship with partners was working well. The ICI has also acknowledged staff commitment to safeguarding and trafficking and the professionalism and effectiveness of the dedicated freight team.

Border Force fully accepts all six of the Chief Inspector's recommendations.

The Home Office response to the recommendations

1. **Recommendation 1** - In relation to the further examination for immigration purposes at Manchester Airport:
   - ensure that '*generally*' the individual is interviewed '*fully to establish all the facts of the case*' in compliance with the 'Border Force Operations Manual'*;* and
   - ensure that in every case where an IS81 has been served the outcome is entered on the central electronic record.

1.1 **Accepted.**

1.2 Border Force guidance states that it is not necessary to interview every passenger who requires further immigration checks at the border. There will be occasions when, for example an officer needs to check that a suitable person is meeting an unaccompanied child or to confirm that a student is still attending a course of study, and a comprehensive interview would be unnecessary. Our aim is to resolve any border security or safeguarding issues as quickly as possible. However we now intend to direct further assurance activity to this area to ensure that casework actions taken by officers are relevant and proportionate to the situation.

1.3 Border Force conducted a two-month pilot at the end of 2015 testing different methods of recording information in relation to people subject to further examination for immigration purposes. This work has now been evaluated and an improved recording process will be implemented from April 2016.

2. **Recommendation 2 -** In order to achieve the optimum *'multi-functional'* workforce envisaged in the 'Manchester Airport Operating Model':

   - re-check the preferences of those Border Force officers based at Manchester Airport who previously opted not to train to be fully *'multi-functional'*; and
   - produce a personal development plan for each officer at Manchester Airport that sets a clear expectation in terms of formal skills training in immigration and customs functions (CS1, CS2 and CS3), with timescales for their completion.

2.1 **Accepted.**

2.2 The Border Force planning team at Manchester Airport continually assesses resources to ensure officers are deployed to best effect across the port and are given regular opportunities to maintain their skill levels without impacting operational performance. A dynamic deployment model is in use, which is able to flex and respond as operational requirements dictate as well as support staff development. A new Border Force training programme incorporates practical sessions on immigration and customs functions and will further equip local managers to lead a multi-functional workforce.

2.3 In line with the standard performance reporting process already in place, all managers will have met with individual staff members to identify any outstanding development needs by the end of April 2016. Training requirements will be fed into a port-wide plan scheduled for delivery by the end of March 2017.

3. **Recommendation 3** - In relation to immigration record keeping at Manchester Airport:

   - improve record keeping for cases where leave to enter is granted, with a clear audit trail from the evidence gathered to the decision; and
   - overhaul the local record keeping process for temporary admission cases, requiring a paper file to be opened in all cases so that a risk assessment (in the approved Home Office format) is retained in line with the 'Operations Manual' and signed off as required by the assurance process.

3.1 **Accepted.**

3.2 Border Force will review the need for paper files in line with the ongoing programme of work to modernise and digitise frontline border functions. In the meantime an improved assurance process has been put in place to provide immediate feedback to individual line managers where issues have arisen in relation to record keeping, audit trails and storage of files. We will ensure records are maintained in line with current guidance.

4. **Recommendation 4 -** In relation to customs functions at Manchester Airport:
   - consider whether the deployment of staff and dogs in the customs channels has become predictable and therefore less effective against experienced smugglers;
   - ensure the detector dogs are targeted against the commodities identified as high priority in the 'Border Force Control Strategy';
   - ensure that successful customs actions are communicated more effectively internally so that staff are fully aware of the frequency, type and value of customs work; and
   - implement the senior management vision that officers with specialist customs expertise should have opportunities to practise and retain their skills.

4.1 **Accepted.**

4.2 Border Force dogs are trained to detect a range of commodities in line with the priorities in the Border Force Control Strategy, including tobacco, cash, products of animal origin and drugs. They are deployed against these as and when needed or in response to targets identified by intelligence and/or during joint operations with partners including the National Crime Agency. Deployment decisions are taken through Border Force's tasking and deployment process and are reviewed periodically according to need and risk. During the period covered by the inspection the Manchester-based dogs were deployed to a range of targets covering all commodities.

4.3 Manchester is currently developing a new briefing system based on staff feedback to improve the way senior managers communicate, including their plans for future activity.

5. **Recommendation 5 -** In order to be better able to manage the planned increases in passenger arrivals at Manchester Airport:
   - Continue to work with Manchester Airport Group (MAG) to identify and promote best practice in relation to queue management and to increase take-up of the e-Passport gates by eligible passengers at all three passenger terminals.

5.1 **Accepted.**

5.2 Border Force continues to work closely with Manchester Airport to increase the throughput of eligible passengers through e-gates and to implement the most effective queue configurations. We have already made good progress; for example in January 2016 Terminal 3 had the highest level of eligible passenger e-gate throughput in the UK.

6. **Recommendation 6 -** In order to improve Border Force employee engagement and morale at Manchester Airport:

    - ensure all staff are aware that the Home Office reward and recognition policy is being used;

    - establish an effective means of publicising and celebrating team successes; and ensure that any local initiatives, such as weekly G7 meetings with staff, are sustained, accessible to all staff (taking account of shift-working), and effective in addressing specific issues, either by agreeing and implementing changes or by explaining fully why this is not possible.

6.1 **Accepted.**

6.2 Border Force at Manchester Airport already promotes and uses the reward and recognition system to good effect. For example, the inaugural regional presentation event in February 2016 recognised the work of seven colleagues from Manchester Airport. They received personal certificates of appreciation from the Regional Director, in the presence of the Director General of Border Force. Such awards are publicised via the internal "Manchester Matters" monthly bulletin and will be further highlighted as the local approach to staff communication is improved, as referenced in the response to recommendation 4.