Border Force response to Independent Chief Inspector's report on the short notice inspection of Birmingham Airport

Border Force thanks the Independent Chief inspector (ICI) for advance sight of his report on Birmingham Airport.

Recommendation 1
We recommend that Border Force ensures that there is a single set of operational guidance, that it is maintained and kept up-to-date, incorporating any changes made by Interim Operational Instructions quickly and effectively.

<u>Border Force accepts this recommendation</u>

Border Force is grateful to the ICI team for highlighting the contradictory nature of guidance for staff operating in the secondary area.

Border Force was already working towards establishing a single set of operational guidance prior to the demerger with UKBA. It continues to engage with the relevant policy owners in HMRC, which owns and is responsible for the HMRC Enforcement Handbook, to combine the relevant sections of that guidance with existing Border Force instructions to establish a single operations manual for Border Force. This will additionally ensure that both Border Force's operational guidance and the HMRC Enforcement Handbook are updated in concert in a timely and effective manner.

A key element of this work is to take action to ensure that all customs guidance, wherever it is currently sited, can be easily accessed, updated and communicated quickly to Border Force staff. We are also exploring the extent to which IT solutions will allow improved access to up-to-date versions of the guidance irrespective of whether it sits on the Home Office's (Horizon) intranet or on HMRC's (Stride) intranet.

Whilst a single set of operational instructions is our ultimate goal, due to the extensive nature of current guidance our immediate priority is to establish a single window which will allow our staff to access all of the operational guidance they need.

This, and future work to rationalise and create a single set of instructions, will also require a significant commitment from HMRC who will need to bring together all of their law enforcement and procedural guidance into a single set of guidance which can be used by Border Force, UKBA CFI Borders (soon to be NCA Border Policing Command) and HMRC control staff (where it is appropriate to their customs functions). We have already started preliminary work with HMRC on how this can be delivered.

Border Force is also engaging with relevant policy owners across other areas of Border Force, UKBA and the Home Office to ensure cross cutting customs and immigration instructions are also taken into account in our guidance improvement work.

Recommendation 2
We recommend that Border Force ensures that managers undertake regular and effective audit and assurance activity to ensure staff are complying with policy, guidance and legislation that covers their work activities.

<u>Border Force accepts this recommendation</u>

Management assurance processes have been put in place across BF Central Region by way of an assurance framework to govern this work. Underpinned by a set of Schemes of Control covering all operational grades, there is now a requirement for team leaders to regularly audit and assure operational duties. There are daily, weekly and monthly checks on various processes, all of which are assured by the next layer of management. Written records are maintained. These are assured by Senior Officers/HM Inspectors and further assurance is carried out by the Assistant Director for the relevant command.

Staff are briefed at the beginning of each shift. These briefings include any changes to operating procedures and details of newly issued Interim Operational Instructions (IOIs).

Nationally, Border Force's Director for Performance and Compliance is establishing a national framework of assurance and audit activity which will include the work required under this recommendation. Internal audit will, as part of a programme of Border Compliance Audit, be undertaking independent reviews at between 20-30 ports over the next 12 months, including at Birmingham Airport.