



UK Border

**Independent Chief
Inspector of Borders
and Immigration**

**Annual Report
for the period
1 April 2016 to
31 March 2017**

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Annual Report for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

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

July 2017



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Print ISBN 9781474148191
Web ISBN 9781474148207
ID 12071701 07/17

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by the Williams Lea Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

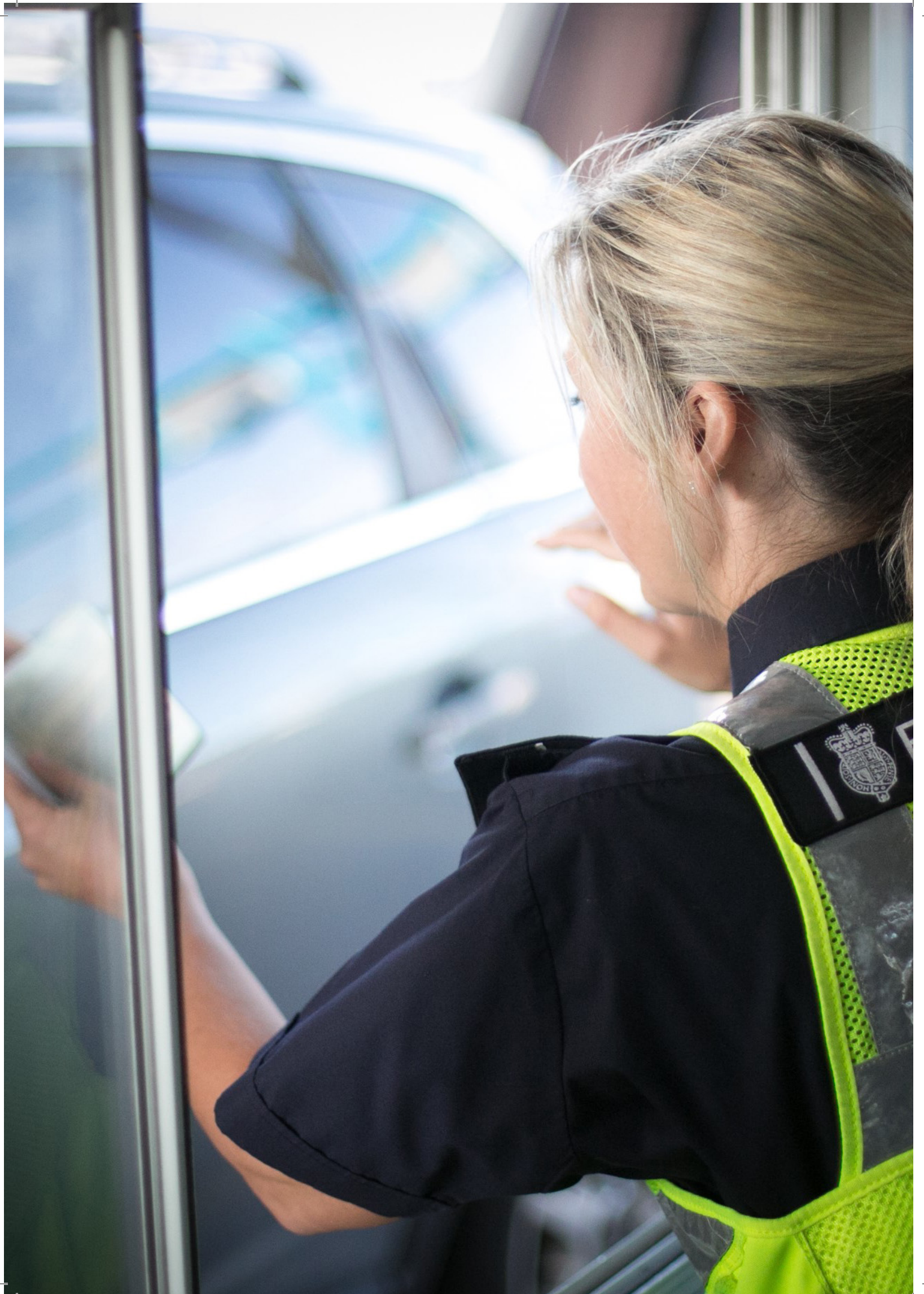
Our purpose

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.independent.gov.uk/icinspector

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Foreword

Measured in terms of the number of inspections published and the number of recommendations made and accepted by the Home Office, 2016–17 has been a successful year for the Inspectorate. I am grateful to my team for their hard work, to the many stakeholders for their important contributions to specific inspections and to the Inspectorate's wider understanding of key issues and concerns, and to the Home Office staff with whom we have worked for their constructive engagement with the inspection process.

At 16 inspection reports and 103 recommendations (85% of which were accepted in full), the Inspectorate's output was on a par with previous years. But, I had hoped to be able to complete more of my inspection plan. For most of the year, however, the Inspectorate was operating well below strength as inspectors left, on promotion or in pursuit of new opportunities, without immediate replacement. By the end of the year, the situation had been remedied through a series of recruitment campaigns and, happily, the Inspectorate began 2017/18 with a full complement of staff.

The principal findings from each of the inspection reports published in 2016–17 are summarised later in this Annual Report. The Annual Report also notes the areas where the overall efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions performed on behalf of the Home Secretary continue to give some cause for concern. These areas remain largely unchanged from last year. Most are not 'quick wins', but require determined and sustained effort from the Home Office to achieve the sort of systemic improvements that are needed.

In 2016–17, I began a programme of re-inspections, examining what action the Home Office had taken in response to my recommendations. Two re-inspection reports were published during the year, and three more re-inspections were almost complete at year-end. The early results have been encouraging. For the most part, the Home Office had implemented the changes it had committed to making and these had led to improvements. These re-inspections have a dual role. As well as providing assurance that the Home Office has acted as promised, they help me to evaluate the original inspections and recommendations, and thereby to improve the Inspectorate's own performance and to focus future inspections where we can add value.

Staff shortages, lengthy recruitment campaigns and comprehensive training programmes for new inspectors have meant that a large amount of my time and energies have had to go into managing the Inspectorate, at some cost to more outward-facing activities. So, while the Inspectorate has managed to extend its stakeholder base during the year, there is more for me to do to ensure that it keeps abreast of all relevant issues and perspectives.

To this end, I have changed the Inspectorate's management structure and recruited a Senior Civil Servant as a Chief of Staff to manage resources, staff development, and routine interactions with the Home Office. This will free me up to spend more time engaging stakeholders, and getting to see immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions in operation and talking to those involved in their delivery.

During 2016–17 there were several changes at the top of the Home Office: a new Home Secretary and Immigration Minister, a new Second Permanent Under Secretary (PUS) responsible for the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship business area, and new Directors General for two of the three Directorates with which I am most concerned (UK Visas and Immigration and Immigration Enforcement).

However, in terms of my own and the Inspectorate’s dealings with the Home Office it was ‘business as usual’, which is to say that we sought to maintain a professional and constructive working relationship, consistent with the legislation that created my role and mindful of my independence. Overall, the relationship with the Home Office has worked well, as it must if the Inspectorate is to achieve its purpose of helping to bring about improvements in performance.

As might be expected, there have been some robust exchanges. In October 2016, I was sufficiently concerned about the quality of the formal Home Office responses to my reports and recommendations to write to the PUS, copying the Secretary of State, identifying where I believed particular responses had not been good enough. This was not about whether my findings and recommendations are accepted, but rather whether the Home Office’s responses are clear and to the point, since it brings the value of independent inspection into question if they are not.

In her reply, the PUS acknowledged the importance of clear responses, whether recommendations are accepted fully, in part, or are rejected, and of the Home Office having processes in place for tracking progress against accepted and partially accepted recommendations. She undertook to ensure that additional focus was given to the quality of responses. Since October, I have not had cause to challenge the Home Office again on this.

Looking ahead, my rolling three-year inspection plan, an updated version of which is at ‘Outlook and Plans 2017–18 to 2019–20’, will enable me to continue to probe the various areas of concern and identify where improvements can be made in respect of particular functions and also systemically. In doing so, in terms of inspection effort and outputs, I am aiming for both breadth and balance in relation to the many different functions and their principal purposes or effects.

I have therefore carried forward those inspection topics that I was unable to complete and that remain relevant, while leaving as much as possible of my original 2017–18 plan intact. With a full staff complement, I am looking to make up some ground in 2017–18. Meanwhile, Year 2 (2018–19) and the new Year 3 (2019–20) of the updated plan, may need to be revised or re-prioritised in light of any changes to borders and immigration functions resulting from the UK’s exit from the European Union, but there will be the opportunity to do this at the end of 2017–18.

David Bolt

Independent Chief Inspector

April 2017



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.

From 2009, the Independent Chief Inspector also held the statutory role of Independent Monitor for Entry Clearance Refusals without the Right of Appeal. The role of the Independent Monitor was set out in section 23 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and amended by paragraph 27 of schedule 7 of the Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act 2002. The Immigration Act 2014 repealed the Independent Monitor role with effect from 20 October 2014, but 'with savings' in respect of certain historic refusals of entry clearance.

The UK Borders Act 2007 empowers the Independent Chief Inspector to monitor, report on and make recommendations about all such functions. However, functions exercised at removal centres, short-term holding facilities and under escort arrangements are excepted in so far as these 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
- 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. These requests are normally referred to as 'Home Secretary Commissions'.

Section 51 of the UK Borders Act 2007 covers the planning process for inspections, which includes the requirement to consult the Secretary of State when preparing a plan (in practice, the plan for the coming year). The 2016/17 Annual Plan was published on the Inspectorate website at the beginning of April 2016. In May 2016, I published a three-year inspection plan covering 2016–17 to 2018–19. An updated three-year plan, extended to include 2019–20, is contained in this Report.

The legislation also requires the Independent Chief Inspector to prepare a plan for each proposed inspection that describes its objectives and terms of reference. To satisfy the legislation, and to ensure that inspections proceed efficiently, I have agreed a Protocol with the Home Office that defines responsibilities, processes, and timescales. This is reviewed annually.

Notwithstanding the above, the legislation makes it clear that the Independent Chief Inspector is not prevented from doing anything that is not mentioned in any plan.

The legislation requires the Independent Chief Inspector to report in writing to the Secretary of State in relation to the performance of the functions specified. In practice, this means submitting a report for each inspection, plus an Annual Report. The Secretary of State lays all reports before Parliament, which she is committed to doing within eight weeks of receipt, subject to both Houses of Parliament being in session.

Of the 16 reports published in 2016/17, all were laid in Parliament within eight weeks (or at the earliest point after a Parliamentary recess), except for the report on 'lorry drops' which took 11 weeks. However, this period overlapped with the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. A seventeenth report, 'An inspection of Border Force operations at east coast seaports' reached the eight week point at the end of March 2017, but publication was delayed as there was no opportunity to do so prior to the General Election.

Reports are published in full except for any material that the Secretary of State determines as undesirable to publish for reasons of national security or where publication might jeopardise an individual's safety, in which case the legislation permits the Secretary of State to omit (in practice, redact) the relevant passages from the published report. There were no redactions to any of the reports published in 2016/17.

As soon as a report has been laid in Parliament it is published on the Inspectorate's website, together with the Home Office's response to the report and recommendations.

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 inspection process was revised in 2015 to make it shorter and to standardise the time taken from the start of an inspection to the delivery of the completed report to the Home Secretary. This meant that reports and recommendations were more topical, and it helped with planning and optimum use of resources.

During 2016–17, the Inspectorate has continued to look for ways to improve its own efficiency, and has managed to complete some inspections more quickly than the 'standard' 100 days/20 weeks and in fewer than 350 working days, but the three-stage process introduced in 2015 has remained the same:

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 files
- 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

Statement of Purpose

The Independent Chief Inspectorate's role is to challenge inefficiency, ineffectiveness or inconsistency with the inspection evidence, but also to recognise good practice; to deliver hard messages, but in ways that are constructive, and always with a commitment to helping to bring about improvements. To this end, the Inspectorate's Statement of Purpose is:

To help improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office's border and immigration functions through unfettered, impartial and evidence-based inspection.

Vision Statement

In order to deliver its stated purpose, 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; and,
- enable and develop its people.



Inspection Findings

Overview

Sixteen inspection reports were laid in Parliament in 2016/17. They are listed at Appendix 1. All can be found on the Inspectorate website, together with the Home Office's formal responses to the reports and to my recommendations.

The 16 reports contained 103 recommendations, of which the Home Office accepted 88 (85%) in full, and partially accepted a further 13. Two recommendations were rejected.

A summary of the key findings from each inspection is provided below. The one thing that was evident from all of the inspections was the commitment of the vast majority of Home Office staff and managers to doing a good job, albeit in some cases morale was low and there was some frustration about priorities, resources, and having the time to do things properly. A number of recommendations therefore pointed to a need for better internal communications.

Overall, the areas of concern remained much the same as in 2015/16, specifically:

- levels of customs activity at the border (especially relative to immigration activity)
- identification and removal of those with no right to remain
- failure of quality assurance processes to identify and correct errors
- poor record keeping
- poor communication with those directly affected by Home Office decisions.

Concerns also persisted about other areas noted previously, such as the proper and proportionate use of powers, management awareness of backlogs and the reliability of management information, careful planning and implementation of change, and the availability of staff with the right training and skills.

In my last Annual Report, I referred to issues that I had identified through my own observations and through discussions with the Home Office and with stakeholders in my first year in post, namely:

- the effectiveness of interactions with other government departments, agencies (including the police) and with private contractors
- the difficulties of running prevention, protection and enforcement agendas, and of managing unpredictable volumes, alongside commitments to excellent customer service
- the capability to identify, develop and deploy technological solutions to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency

I have seen nothing in 2016–17 to suggest that these issues can now be set aside as no longer relevant or resolved.

Previously, I also raised a concern about the Home Office’s ‘agility to respond quickly to new threats and challenges’. In 2016–17, I found evidence of the responsible directorates mobilising quickly to respond to new or emerging threats. One such example was the response to the increase in clandestine entrants (‘lorry drops’). However, this also highlighted that resources are already fully committed, and that prioritising a new threat involves hard choices and comes at a cost to existing work.

In updating my three-year inspection plan, I have tried to take all of the above into account. I will seek out opportunities to test these areas of concern when scoping each of the 2017/18 inspections, including looking for evidence of improvement so that, where appropriate, particular concerns can be put to bed.

Summary of findings from 2016/17 inspections

Previous Annual Reports have grouped reports under the three Home Office Directorates responsible for delivery of the bulk of borders and immigration functions: Border Force; Immigration Enforcement; and UK Visas and Immigration. Because of the way functions are organised, inspections have tended to focus on one or other Directorate, as have recommendations for improvement. However, my 2016/17 Inspection Plan was set out under five themes, reflecting the main purpose or outcome of the various functions, and this format is followed below. In practice, a number of the inspections touched on more than one theme.

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

Three inspections had protecting the border as their main theme.

‘An Inspection of Border Force Operations at Manchester Airport’ (July – October 2015)

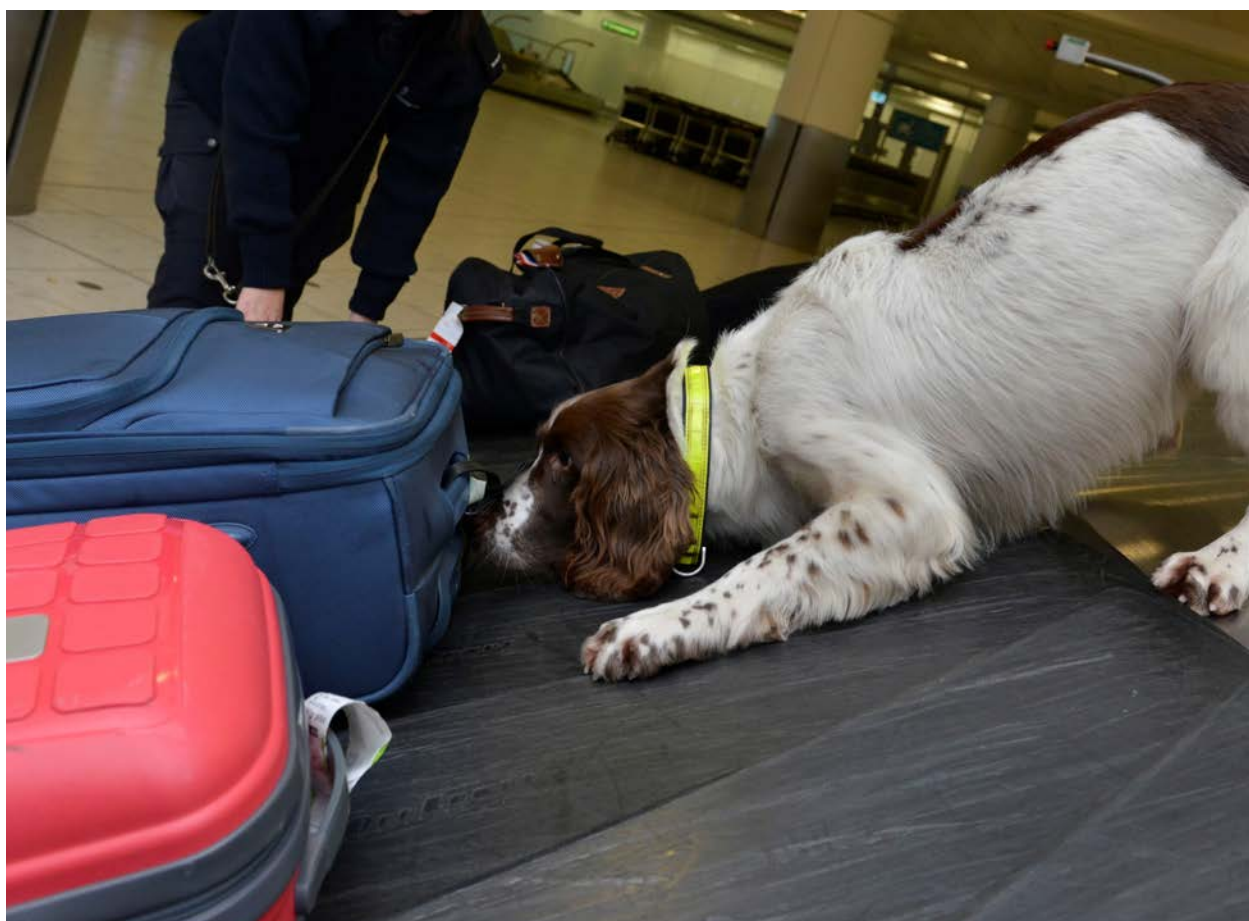
This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of Border Force’s control for immigration and customs purposes of people and goods entering and leaving the UK at the UK’s third largest airport. Manchester Airport has three passenger terminals and a freight terminal and is a travel hub for the North of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In 2014–15, it handled over 22 million passengers, with flights to more than 200 destinations. Passenger traffic had been growing, and Manchester Airport Group had been driving forward an ambitious expansion plan that had seen new investment and increased flights, including new routes to China.

The inspection found that officers carrying out immigration checks understood and complied with the requirements of the Border Force ‘Operating Mandate’, although a number were not yet trained in the full range of immigration duties and this led to inefficiencies in processing passengers and some operational risks. Senior managers had recognised the training issue and plans were in place to address it.

Border Force was delivering its customs functions in line with relevant legislation and guidance. Customs checks had detected a range of illicit goods, but had been less successful against high priorities, such as Class A drugs. There were questions about whether detector dogs were being used to best effect. Some officers believed that their customs experience was not being put to best use; they risked losing their specialist skills, as they were being deployed to the immigration controls for the majority of the time.

Border Force had retained a dedicated customs team to deal with freight. The team enjoyed a degree of autonomy and dealt directly and effectively with the freight handling companies and other local partners. Morale was noticeably higher than that of many of officers in the passenger terminals, who felt undervalued and saw management as inflexible and unfair, despite the latter's efforts to communicate and recognise successes, and to address specific staff concerns.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 15 February 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 13 April 2016. It made six recommendations for improvement, all of which were accepted.



'An Inspection of the Intelligence Functions of Border Force and Immigration Enforcement' (November 2015 - May 2016)

Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) all aim to be 'intelligence-led' when determining their priorities and deciding where and how to deploy resources. Being 'intelligence-led' requires trained staff and functioning processes and systems, to collect relevant information, to evaluate it, and to ensure that it reaches those who need to know it and act upon it in a usable form and in good time. It is particularly important where resources are stretched and choices have to be made about what gets done and what gets dropped.

This inspection looked at the efficiency and effectiveness of the intelligence functions within Border Force and Immigration Enforcement (the latter services the intelligence needs of UKVI), taking note of various projects and initiatives underway within the Home Office aimed at transforming these functions.

The inspection found that Border Force and Immigration Enforcement had made considerable efforts to develop and improve their intelligence functions since they were last inspected (in

2011 and 2014). Both directorates had made significant progress towards becoming truly 'intelligence-led' by implementing the key components of the National Intelligence Model (NIM), adapted to suit their particular circumstances and challenges.

However, both recognised that a lot remained to be done practically, in terms of systems and processes, and culturally, in terms of 'hearts and minds'. The big transformation projects promised a great deal, and it was important to maintain their momentum. But, there is also a need to find solutions in faster time to some current inefficiencies and inconsistencies. In particular, both directorates needed to ensure that their staff had access to and made full use of relevant IT systems; that operational priorities were aligned nationally, regionally and locally; and that information and knowledge acquired by frontline staff was fed back so that the intelligence picture was as complete as possible.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 16 June 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 21 July 2016. It made seven recommendations for improvements, six of which were accepted and one partially accepted.

'An inspection of Border Force operations at Coventry and Langley postal hubs' (March - July 2016)

Letters, parcels, packets and other articles (collectively known as 'postal packets') arriving in the UK from overseas by post are forwarded to one of two postal hubs (also known as 'Offices of Exchange'), where they are processed by the public postal services provider (Royal Mail Group) for onward delivery to the recipient.

Border Force officers are based at the two 'Offices of Exchange' in Coventry (Coventry International Hub) and Langley (Heathrow Worldwide Distribution Centre), where they may legally examine postal packets for customs purposes. Border Force performs two main functions: an anti-smuggling function, which involves the detection and seizure of controlled and prohibited items; and a fiscal charging function, which identifies items where duties are owed and levies the appropriate charges.

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of Border Force operations at Coventry and Langley. It found that, overall, Border Force worked efficiently and effectively at both locations, coping well with the high volumes of postal packets and adapting its risk-based approach to meet the particular circumstances and challenges at each hub.

The scale and time-sensitive nature of postal packet movements, and the legislation governing their handling, required Border Force and Royal Mail Group to work collaboratively, which was the case at an organisational level, where a strong working relationship had been built over time. This relationship was based on a shared understanding of each other's objectives and needs, and recognition that each is dependent on the other. Both had also worked with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs on the introduction of an automated system for fiscal charging (Customs Declaration System—CDS) that had created some efficiencies, with more to follow when its use can be extended.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 19 August 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 13 October 2016. It made eight recommendations for improvements, all of which were accepted. These included ensuring more and better communication to and with frontline Border Force officers at both hubs about why some tasks and practices are necessary, the rationale for particular initiatives, and in response to problems when raised.

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

Three inspections had providing a service as their main theme.

'An inspection of the Administrative Review processes introduced following the 2014 Immigration Act' (September — December 2015)

The 2014 Immigration Act removed the right of appeal to the Immigration and Asylum Tribunal for various types of immigration decision, and replaced it with an administrative review (AR) process internal to the Home Office to provide 'a proportionate and less costly mechanism for resolving case working errors'.

During the passage of the 2014 Immigration Bill, some MPs and peers argued that an internal Home Office AR system would not be an effective replacement for an appeal to an Immigration and Asylum Tribunal judge, who was independent of the Home Office. An amendment was made to the Bill during its passage through the Lords, resulting in section 16 of the 2014 Act, which stated:

'Before the end of the period of 12 months beginning on the day on which section 15 comes into force, the Secretary of State must commission from the Chief Inspector [of Borders and Immigration] a report that addresses the following matters

- the effectiveness of administrative review in identifying case working errors
- the effectiveness of administrative review in correcting case working errors
- the independence of persons conducting administrative review (in terms of their separation from the original decision-maker).'

In June 2015, the Home Secretary commissioned a report addressing these three matters. However, I extended the scope of the inspection to take in service standards in dealing with ARs, consistency across different areas of the Home Office, and organisational learning and cost savings.

The inspection found that levels of accuracy and consistency varied between in-country, overseas and 'at the border' ARs, but overall there was significant room for improvement in respect of the effectiveness of ARs in identifying and correcting case working errors, and in communicating decisions to applicants.

The Home Office had created a separate, dedicated team to handle in-country reviews. But, most overseas and 'at the border' reviews were carried out locally, and while the inspection found no indications of bias, it was harder to evidence that overseas and 'at the border' reviewers were truly separate and independent.

The Home Office was comfortably meeting its 28-day service standard for responses to administrative review applications, except in a proportion of overseas applications. However, there was no systematic feedback to reviewers (or to original decision makers) regarding decisions that had been subject to a successful legal challenge, so organisational learning was at best patchy. Meanwhile, despite arguing that the introduction of administrative reviews would save £261m over 10 years, the Home Office had yet to do any analysis of the cost savings.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 4 April 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 26 May 2016. It made 14 recommendations, grouped under four headings: administrative review applications; consideration of reviews; quality assurance; and learning. The Home Office accepted 13 of the recommendations and partially accepted the fourteenth.

'An inspection of family reunion applications' (January - May 2016)

Dependent family members of individuals ('sponsors') who have been granted asylum or five years Humanitarian Protection leave to remain may apply to the Home Office to be reunited in the UK. Under the Immigration Rules, eligibility for 'family reunion' is limited to spouses, civil partners, unmarried/same sex partners and biological children under the age of 18, who formed part of the family unit at the time the sponsor fled to seek asylum.

Stakeholders from the asylum and refugee sector had raised concerns about the efficiency and fairness of the Home Office's management of family reunion applications. They argued that the process was unnecessarily protracted, that applicants were being held to excessively high thresholds to establish their identity, and that the requirement to produce documentary evidence of identity and of the claimed relationship to the sponsor was impacting disproportionately on applicants from areas of conflict.

This inspection therefore examined how family reunion was working, focusing on the three visa posts (Amman, Istanbul and Pretoria) with the highest numbers of applicants, and looking particularly at the nationalities (Syrians, Iranians, Eritreans, Somalis and Sudanese) that had made the most applications and were most often refused. Because stakeholders had specifically raised the handling of Kuwaiti Bidoon applicants in Amman, the inspection also looked at this.

The inspection found that the Home Office was too ready to refuse applications where it judged that the applicant had failed to provide sufficient evidence to satisfy the eligibility criteria, when deferring a decision to allow the applicant to produce the 'missing' evidence might have been the fairer and more efficient option. This was particularly the case when the key piece of evidence was a DNA test establishing the relationship to the sponsor was as claimed, and the Home Office's withdrawal of commissioned and funded DNA testing in 2014 appeared to have been a major cause of the increase in first-time refusals for certain nationalities.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 18 July 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 14 September 2016. It made ten recommendations all of which were accepted. Collectively, the recommendations 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.

'An Inspection of the General Register Office for England and Wales, with particular emphasis on birth records' (March – June 2016)

On 29 January 2016, the Home Secretary wrote requesting that I review the 'checking of immigration status within civil registration processes e.g. birth registration and status of parents etc.'¹ This review was incorporated into an inspection of the efficiency and effectiveness of the General Register Office for England & Wales (GRO), with a particular focus on birth registration.

GRO is part of Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO), which is part of the Home Office's borders, immigration and citizenship business area.² GRO is involved in HMPO's drive for continuous improvement, and with HMPO holds the Customer Service Excellence award.

The inspection found a strong customer service culture at GRO. Despite having to operate within legislation that had not kept pace with the digital age, GRO staff dealt effectively with around

¹ Under section 50(1)(b) of the UK Borders Act 2007 the Home Secretary may request the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to report 'in relation to specified matters'

² From October 2016, HMPO and UK Visas and Immigration came under the same Director General

23,000 requests for certified copies of records per week. Most requests were made online, but legislation required paper certificates to be printed for dispatch by post, which was labour-intensive. Similarly, the potential for cost recovery for GRO's services had not been realised, although work was in hand to update the fees system.

False, fraudulently obtained and stolen birth records are used to enable a range of immigration and other frauds. There was a need to collate and analyse information about such frauds in order to combat them effectively. However, legislation to enable GRO to share public records had been enacted in a piecemeal way, leaving obstacles to data-sharing.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 19 August 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 13 October 2016. It made four recommendations, all of which were accepted.

With regard to the Home Secretary's particular question, the inspection found that the birth registration process did not include a check of the immigration status of the parent(s). The aim has been to encourage 100% registration of births, as registrations play a key role in child safeguarding, since they mean children are 'visible' to local authorities and services. They also inform national infrastructure planning, with future demand for school places and other services. Possible gains in relation to immigration control from the inclusion of an immigration status check in the process would need to be set against the risk that this would deter some parents from registering the birth of their child.



Theme 3: Compliance Management and Enforcement

Four inspections had compliance management and enforcement as their main theme.

'A short notice inspection of the Home Office response to 'lorry drops'' (October 2015 – January 2016)

The number of migrants entering the UK clandestinely each year is not known. However, in the six months from 1 April 2015 the Home Office encountered almost three times as many clandestine entrants as in the same period in the previous year.

Most of those encountered had entered the UK concealed in or on a heavy goods vehicle and had left the vehicle at its first stopping-point beyond the port of entry. This form of clandestine entry is commonly referred to as a 'lorry drop'. Although there is no such thing as a typical 'lorry drop', in the period covered by the inspection most of the migrants encountered were males aged under 30, and originating from Eritrea, Iran, Syria, Sudan and Afghanistan.

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Home Office's response to 'lorry drops', including partnership working, in particular with police forces, and any impact on other activities. It also examined how the Home Office had handled the immigration cases of the individuals encountered.

The inspection found that, despite the significant increase in encounters, the Home Office had maintained the quality of its initial response. Immigration status and detention decisions had been made in accordance with legislation and guidance. The checking of security and immigration records had in fact improved in 2015 (albeit from an extremely low base).

Home Office staff and police were meeting their safeguarding responsibilities when encountering claimed or suspected minors, although there was a significant risk that those placed in the care of social services would abscond. There was less confidence when it came to identifying potential victims of trafficking, and better feedback was needed when cases were referred.

While front-line staff had coped well with the extra demands, in some areas the response to 'lorry drops' had been at the expense of other enforcement priorities, such as illegal working and sham marriages, raising questions about Immigration Enforcement's capacity and resilience, particularly if faced with a similar challenge in summer 2016.

The inspection also identified that while the number of initial decisions on asylum claims had increased compared with 2014, this increase fell well short of the increased number of claims made by clandestine entrants, and the Home Office would need to take care not to allow the outstanding claims to grow to problematic levels.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 27 April 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 21 July 2016. It made six recommendations, four of which were accepted and two partially accepted.

'An inspection of the 'hostile environment' measures relating to driving licences and bank accounts' (January - July 2016)

The Immigration Act 2014 introduced a range of measures aimed at creating a 'hostile environment' for individuals who are in the UK without valid leave. The government's stated intention was to deny illegal migrants access to public and other services and benefits to which they were not entitled by virtue of their immigration status, in the expectation that this would

persuade large numbers to depart the UK voluntarily and would reduce the ‘pull factor’ for anyone thinking to come to the UK to settle illegally.

In presenting its case for new powers, the government argued that the measures were right in principle and would be seen as fair by most people. However, stakeholders expressed serious concerns that the effects would be divisive and damaging to individuals and communities.

Each of the measures in the 2014 Act is distinct and operates independently, but the Home Office regards them as a ‘package’ in that their power to influence the decisions made by illegal migrants comes from their combined and cumulative impact.

This inspection looked at two ‘hostile environment’ measures. Firstly, the refusal by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) of applications for a UK driving licence and the revocation of existing licences for individuals not lawfully resident in the UK. Secondly, the requirement placed on banks and building societies to refuse an application for a UK current account from an individual listed as a ‘disqualified person’.

These two measures were the most mature, since limited versions of both were in place prior to the 2014 Act. They also share certain characteristics, in particular a reliance on bulk data sharing.

The inspection found that, because of the pre-existing relationships between the Home Office and DVLA and Cifas,³ the development and implementation of these measures was handled well, and the Home Office continued to work effectively and collaboratively with both partners. However, the Home Office needed to ensure that sufficient attention and effort was put into improving the arrangements for data sharing, for assuring data quality, for processing matches and for making use of the resulting knowledge and intelligence. It also needed to give greater thought to the evaluation of these measures and to the overall ‘package’ of measures.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 29 July 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 13 October 2016. It made 14 recommendations, of which eight were accepted, five partially accepted. One recommendation, which related to data cleansing, was rejected.

‘An inspection of the implementation of the 2014 ‘hostile environment’ provisions for tackling sham marriage’ (August - September 2016)

The Immigration Act 2014 included new ‘hostile environment’ provisions in relation to sham marriages and civil partnerships (those entered into by a non-EEA national purely to gain an immigration advantage). From 2 March 2015, the gap between notifying intent to marry and the ceremony was extended from 15 to 28 days, and could be further extended to 70 days to enable the Home Office to investigate the genuineness of the relationship. Couples failing to comply with an investigation were not allowed to marry, while those who comply could do so, but if the Home Office determined the latter’s relationship to be sham it would seek to refuse any future application to remain in the UK based on that marriage.

The inspection found that initial implementation of the new provisions was problematic. The new approach was not communicated effectively, and some registrars interpreted the fact that Immigration Enforcement and Compliance (ICE) teams were no longer attending register offices to prevent ceremonies from going ahead as the Home Office being less interested in sham marriage. Meanwhile, staff in the new Marriage Referral Assessment Unit (MRAU) felt deskilled as they struggled with heavily administrative processes, fragmented IT and limited operational support from local ICE teams. As a result, cases were not being determined within 70 days.

³ Formerly known as the Credit Industry Fraud Avoidance Service

Managers intervened to devise a new process (Operation Equal). A pilot, which began in January 2016, produced encouraging results in terms of cases completed to time. However, a high proportion of couples were assessed as genuine, raising questions about selection for investigation and the ability of interviewers to expose sham couples who had prepared well or been coached by facilitators.

Operation Equal was rolled out nationally from 20 June 2016, too late for the efficiency and effectiveness of the new arrangements to be fully tested in this inspection, so this will fall to a later re-inspection when more evidence is available. For any meaningful evaluation of the sham marriage provisions, however, the Home Office will need to improve the range and granularity of its data collection.

This report was sent to the Home Secretary on 25 October 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 15 December 2016. It made five recommendations, all of which were accepted.

‘An inspection into failed right of abode applications and referral for enforcement action’

On 29 January 2016, the Home Secretary wrote to request that I review ‘failed right of abode applications and referral for enforcement action’. My review took the form of a standard inspection.

Right of Abode applications formed a very small proportion of the caseload of the Home Office Nationality Group. Between 2005 and 2015, the Home Office recorded 26,024 Right of Abode applications, of which 4,771 were refused.

File sampling suggested that a significant percentage of refused applications were from individuals with no right to remain in the UK at the time of applying, and also that many applicants had employed deception in attempting to obtain a Certificate of Entitlement to Right of Abode. However, the inspection found that there had been no consistency in referring refused applicants for enforcement action.

Most of the Nationality Group’s caseload concerned individuals who were in the UK legally, rather than immigration offenders. Refusal of a Right of Abode application was not regarded as a negative immigration decision. Failed applications had not been seen in the wider context of immigration control. Consequently, refused applicants were not placed automatically into the Migration Refusal Pool (MRP), where they would be visible to Removals Casework. Overstayers were not being identified or referred for enforcement action, and relevant details (such as new addresses) for absconders were not being passed on for enforcement action. Where forged documents had been submitted with an application, these had been retained, but there had been no enforcement follow-up.

From 2016, some referrals had been made and some refused applicants had been adopted for enforcement action. However, the referral process was not in line with Home Office guidance and remained sub-optimal. Managers in the Right of Abode team had since acknowledged the need to improve co-ordination with enforcement colleagues and to put in place a referral process for refused cases that followed the relevant guidance.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 19 August 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 13 October 2016. It made three recommendations for improvement all of which were accepted.

Theme 4: Working with others

Two inspections had working with others as their main theme.

'An inspection into the extent to which the police are identifying and flagging arrested foreign nationals to the Home Office and checking their status'

On 29 January 2016, the Home Secretary wrote to request that I review 'the extent to which the police are identifying and flagging foreign nationals arrested to the Home Office and checking status'. The review took the form of a standard inspection.

The inspection found that not all foreign nationals arrested in the UK by the police were referred to the Home Office for an immigration status check. It was not possible to say how many arrested foreign nationals went unchecked. Home Office data indicated that the level of referrals varied across the UK. It was much higher in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) area, where Operation Nexus (initiated in 2012) had led to closer and smarter working between the police and the Home Office. In general, joint working, including embedding Immigration Officers in police stations, produced the best results.

Data and systems access issues hampered overall efficiency and effectiveness, and restrictions on data sharing in relation to previous offences committed overseas reduced the effectiveness of joint efforts to target 'High Harm' individuals who should be prioritised for removal from the UK.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 19 August 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 13 October 2016. It made three recommendations, of which two were accepted and the third partially accepted.

The partially accepted recommendation included improving data sharing with ACRO Criminal Records Office. Following publication of the report, I was invited to visit ACRO for a briefing on its work with the Home Office, and was encouraged to learn that Immigration Enforcement planned to embed a team of officers with ACRO to facilitate information exchange. I am grateful to ACRO's Chief Executive, Ian Readhead OBE QPM and his team for the invitation and for their extremely informative briefing.

'An Inspection of Border Force's Identification and Treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery' (July - October 2016)

In November 2014, the government published its Modern Slavery Strategy. In her Foreword, the then Home Secretary referred to a new Bill that would "ensure tough penalties are in place, alongside important protections and support for victims". The government's approach, she added, "puts victims at the heart of everything we do". The Modern Slavery Act 2015 became law on 26 March 2015. It established the post of Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC), and this inspection was planned and carried out in close collaboration with the Commissioner, Kevin Hyland OBE, and his team.

The Modern Slavery Strategy recognised Border Force as the lead for targeting and disrupting traffickers and identifying potential victims at the border. It referred to Border Force's programme to strengthen its capability to tackle modern slavery, including through the training of frontline officers and the rolling out of specialist safeguarding and trafficking (SAT) teams to support potential victims and ensure they receive the immediate help and support they need.

In reality, this programme was a consolidation of the work Border Force was already doing. As part of the UK's response to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ratified by the UK in 2008), Border Force (and previously the UK Border Agency) had been identifying and referring potential victims into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). And, frontline Border Force officers were aware of and discharging their responsibilities under Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Welfare Act 2009 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The inspection therefore concentrated on what Border Force had achieved since 2014 to strengthen its capabilities and the effect this had had on its performance. It found that, for a number of practical and logistical reasons, the task of identifying victims at the immigration and customs controls was and would remain a challenging one. Border Force's emphasis on frontline training, with support from SAT teams, was sensible and considerable effort had gone into this. However, training delivery and validation needed closer management.

The standard of its record keeping was letting Border Force down, and this made it difficult to assess the quality of its decision making and arrive at a clear and reliable picture of its overall performance. However, set against the estimated scale of the problem, its annual targets for identifying potential victims at the border since 2014 were modest, while the numbers of suspected traffickers identified and referred for investigation had been low by any standards.

The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner noted that, in 2015, 94% of potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM came from 101 countries, and many of these will have entered the UK through immigration controls staffed by Border Force. He recognised pockets of good practice, but called for major improvements in identification of victims and traffickers, in data collection and sharing, in training, and in partnership working.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 9 December 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 2 February 2017. It made 12 recommendations, covering record keeping and data collection, training, decision-making and managing effective outcomes, and partnership working and awareness raising. The Home Office accepted nine of these and partially accepted three. In addition, IASC made a number of recommendations specific to training and training materials, which I fully endorsed.

Theme 5: Learning and improving

Four inspections had learning and improving as their main theme.

'Inspection of Country of Origin Information: May 2016 Report'

This was the first report of this type following the change to the reporting arrangements for reviews from the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) intended to ensure that this work received the same level of ministerial attention as other inspection reports.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 3 June 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 21 July 2016. I made seven recommendations in support of the attached country reviews, which related to Nigeria, Iran and Ukraine.

The recommendations covered country information report structure, timeliness and circulation of updates following an IAGCI review, and the basis for accepting or rejecting an IAGCI

recommendation. The Home Office accepted six of the recommendations. It rejected the seventh recommendation, that it should fund the translation into English of information that IAGCI has recommended and the Home Office has 'accepted' should be included in a country information report and is not available from any other source. The Home Office responded that it would "continue to decide on a case-by-case basis whether a translation is necessary, balancing the value of the information to the understanding of the country situation and the cost of translation."

'Inspection of Country of Origin Information: November 2016 Report'

This report covered the reviews considered and signed off by the IAGCI at its November 2016 meeting, which related to Afghanistan, Sudan and Vietnam. The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 13 December 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 3 February 2017.

I made four recommendations, which included ensuring that where an IAGCI review raises issues that fall outside the remit of the team responsible for producing country information products, the relevant business areas are made aware and respond. I also recommended that country information products that refer to trafficking and modern slavery should be shared in draft with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC) to ensure that they reflect the IASC's knowledge and expectations.

All four recommendations were accepted.



'A re-inspection of Border Force operations at Heathrow Airport' (May 2016)

In my inspection plan for 2016–17 to 2018–19, I indicated my intention after an appropriate interval to re-inspect areas that I had inspected in order to examine what the Home Office had done to implement my recommendations and what effect this has had.

As well as providing assurance that the Home Office was meeting the commitments made in its formal response to the original report, these re-inspections would help me to gauge whether inspections were having the desired impact and to improve the Inspectorate's own efficiency and effectiveness.

The first of these re-inspections looked at Border Force operations at London Heathrow Airport (LHR), focusing primarily on Terminal 5. The original report was published in July 2015. It recognised that, for the most part, Border Force at LHR was operating efficiently and effectively. However, it identified some areas of poor performance and contained six recommendations for improvement. The Home Office accepted all six recommendations.

The re-inspection found that Border Force had made good progress in relation to the majority of the recommendations, in particular in relation to improving the quality of notebook entries, and assuring decision quality and legal compliance regarding the detention and searching of passengers. However, some problems identified in the original report persisted, despite management efforts to address them, specifically failure to record the grounds for initially

stopping and speaking to a passenger, notebook storage, and the consistent treatment of passengers in the customs channels. These areas required further attention, and senior managers needed to do more to win the 'hearts and minds' of frontline staff to achieve the necessary improvements.

The re-inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary on 13 July 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 8 September 2016. It made no new recommendations.

'A re-inspection of the handling of Tier 4 sponsor licence compliance' (July 2016)

Between June and October 2014, the Inspectorate examined how effectively the Home Office monitored the compliance of Tier 4 sponsors with their sponsor duties, and also looked at its handling of investigations into sponsors linked to English language test centres operated by the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

The inspection found that managers and staff had worked efficiently and effectively to visit and assess the large number of colleges identified as having some link to ETS, and to maintain, suspend and/or revoke sponsor licences in light of what they found. This had led to the creation of a dedicated Tier 4 compliance network to deal with the more complex cases and to improvements in the scrutiny of new licence applications and of secure English Language Test (SELT) providers.

However, the inspection also identified weaknesses in procedures and practice, in particular the lack of detail in visit reports where sponsors were deemed to be fully compliant, and the fact that compliance visits and 'satisfactory' reports received little or no management oversight, making it highly likely that non-compliance was being missed.

The original report, which was sent to the Home Secretary on 2 June 2015, made five recommendations, all of which were accepted.

The re-inspection found that the quality and consistency of compliance visit reports had been improved through revised guidance, a template and checklist, and new quality assurance measures, although the latter would be more robust if applied to all reports, not just those with adverse outcomes. In relation to record storage and retrieval and to the grading of staff, UKVI had made some progress, but the solutions rested with a restructuring of the Sponsor Management Network, which was well in hand but not due to be completed until September 2016.

The re-inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary on 22 August 2016 and was laid in Parliament on 13 October 2016. It made no new recommendations.

'Live' inspections as at 31 March 2017

Eleven inspections begun in 2016/17 were at various stages of completion at 31 March 2017. They are as follows:

- 'An inspection of Border Force operations at east coast seaports': report sent to the Home Secretary on 1 February 2017.
- 'A re-inspection of Tier 4 Curtailment': report sent to the Home Secretary on 1 March 2017
- 'An inspection of Border Force operations at Gatwick Airport (South Terminal)': report sent to the Home Secretary on 10 March 2017

- ‘An inspection of Country of Origin Information’: report sent to the Home Secretary on 11 May 2017
- ‘A re-inspection of Complaints Handling’: report sent to the Home Secretary on 2 May 2017
- ‘An inspection of Visa Operations – Settlement and Family Visit visas at Croydon and Istanbul’: report sent to the Home Secretary on 25 May 2017
- ‘An interim re-inspection of family reunion applications received at the Istanbul Decision Making Centre’: report sent to Home Secretary on 26 May 2017
- ‘A short notice 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’: report sent to the Home Secretary on 10 May 2017
- ‘A re-inspection of Administrative Reviews’: report sent to the Home Secretary on 23 May 2017
- ‘An inspection of reporting arrangements, including the work of Reporting Centres’: report sent to the Home Secretary on 24 May 2017
- ‘An inspection of Removals, focusing on Foreign National Offenders’: report sent to the Home Secretary on 20 June 2017

Identification and treatment of vulnerable individuals – Children

My 2016–17 inspection plan included the topic ‘Children - across the borders and immigration systems (including the exercise of section 55 safeguarding duties)’.⁴ My intention had been to carry out an inspection focused specifically on children, but in the event I did not have the resources to take on this major piece of work. Instead, the Home Office’s identification and treatment of children, including its exercise of its s.55 safeguarding duties, was covered in each inspection in 2016–17 where it was relevant (seven out of the 17).

In preparation for further children-related inspection activity in 2017/18, in November 2016 I invited the Children’s Society to brief the Inspectorate on its perspective on how children are affected by the Home Office’s immigration, asylum and nationality functions. In February 2017, I also commissioned and funded a literature review by an academic of how the Home Office ensures it acts in the best interests of the child when conducting these functions, specifically how it determines, reviews and secures the child’s best interests. The review, which will be completed in the first quarter of 2017–18, will cover published research, and rulings from relevant legal cases from the period January 2013 to December 2016, and will help to inform which areas in relation to children the Inspectorate will examine.

The review will aim to answer the following questions.

- What evidence is there that children’s rights under UK and EU law, and the UNHCR Convention on the Rights of the Child, are understood and respected by the Home Office?
- What evidence, if any, is there that the rights of children have been disregarded by the Home Office?
- What evidence is there of a child-sensitive approach to the processing of asylum claims, including from unaccompanied minors?
- What does the evidence show about the Home Office’s approach to family unification?

⁴ Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009



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 to advise the Chief Inspector 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.

IAGCI commissions (through tenders managed by the Inspectorate) and quality assures reviews from independent reviewers of selected country information. The reviewers are typically academics with relevant knowledge and expertise. The work is funded by the Inspectorate. In deciding which country information products to review, IAGCI takes account of the volume of asylum claims relating to that material and how long it is since the material was last reviewed.

During 2016–17, I made changes to the way that reports from IAGCI were handled, bringing the final stages of the process into line with other inspection reports. Briefly, the new process is:

- IAGCI quality assures the completed reviews and sends them to the Home Office unit responsible for producing COI material (Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT)) to respond to the detailed points made by the reviewer
- IAGCI meets with CPIT and the reviewers to go through the reviews and consider, in particular, any points of disagreement (I also attend this meeting)
- IAGCI signs off the reviews, and I write a covering report with my recommendations and send this with the reviews and the CPIT responses to the Home Secretary to lay in Parliament
- Once the report is laid in Parliament it is published on the Inspectorate website

The purpose of this change was to ensure that this important area of the Inspectorate’s work received the same level of ministerial attention as other areas, and in that respect it has been successful.

Membership

Membership of the IAGCI is by invitation of the Independent Chief Inspector and 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.

I am grateful to all of the members for their time and expertise, given freely, without which I could not fulfil this important part of my remit. My thanks go especially to Dr Laura Hammond who has

completed another year as Chair, and to Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, from the London School of Economics, who resigned from the group in May 2016, having been a member since May 2011.

In October 2016, three new members joined IAGCI: Professor Giorgia Dona, Dr Nando Sigona, and Dr Julie Vullnetari. I am grateful to them for agreeing to become members.

List of members

Independent members:

- Dr Laura Hammond (School of Oriental and African Studies)
- Dr Mike Collyer (Sussex University)
- Dr Ceri Oeppen (Sussex University)
- Dr Patricia Daley (Oxford University)
- Dr Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (London School of Economics) resigned May 2016
- Dr Nando Sigona (University of Birmingham) wef October 2016
- Dr Julie Vullnetari (University of Southampton) wef October 2016
- Professor Giorgia Dona (University of East London) wef October 2016

Representative members:

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

Meetings

During 2016–17, IAGCI met on three occasions, in May 2016, November 2016 and in March 2017. Minutes of these meetings can be found on the Inspectorate's website.

The Home Office Country Policy and Information Team was represented at each meeting, and the independent reviewers also attended at the invitation of the Chair.

Published reviews

The full list of the country of origin products reviewed during 2016/17 is at Appendix 1. At the time of writing, the reviews from the March 2017 IAGCI meeting were with the Home Secretary awaiting publication with my covering report and recommendations.

Further details, terms of reference, minutes and reports from the IAGCI can be found on the Inspectorate website 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. However, the latter's immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions involve and affect a wide range of other bodies and touch everyone living in or seeking to visit the UK. In order to inform individual inspections and the overall inspection programme it is therefore essential that the Inspectorate reaches out to '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

I chair three stakeholder fora 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 three 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 three groups are:

- **Refugee and Asylum Forum**
The Refugee and Asylum Forum (RAF) was created in 2009. Its membership consists of key organisations with an interest in and knowledge of the Home Office's performance in this area. In 2016/17, I chaired two meetings of the RAF. I am grateful to all of the members for helping me to understand the issues of importance to them, and particularly to those members who spoke at one of the Inspectorate's knowledge events (see below). Two new members, Liberty and British Red Cross, were invited to join the RAF in 2016/17.
- **Aviation Stakeholder Forum**
The Aviation Stakeholder Forum was created in 2011. Membership consists of UK airport and airline operators. During 2016/17, the Aviation Stakeholder Forum met once, and I made visits to Heathrow and Gatwick airports in connection with particular inspections. In November 2016, I was invited to speak to a meeting of the Airport Operators' Association's Public Affairs and Communications Network, following which I invited the Regional and Business Airports Group (RABA) and Cardiff Airport (a RABA member) to join the Aviation Stakeholder Forum.

- **Seaports Stakeholder Forum**

The Seaports Stakeholder Forum was also created in 2011. Membership consists of UK seaports and shipping organisations. During 2015/16, the Seaports Stakeholder Forum met once, and I visited the ports of Harwich, Hull and Immingham in connection with an inspection of Border Force operations at east coast ports. I also attended the UK Chamber of Shipping Annual Dinner.

Membership and Minutes of meetings for all three fora are available on the Inspectorate website.



Image courtesy of Embassy Magazine

Improved stakeholder engagement

The Inspectorate's new Communications Manager took up her post at the beginning of 2016–17. Her priority has been to engage the members of the three stakeholder fora in a more regular dialogue (to build on the group meetings and stakeholder input to specific inspections), and to extend the Inspectorate's range of contacts in these and other relevant areas. As a first step, the Communications Manager mapped existing and potential new stakeholders, who were then surveyed to understand their needs and priorities. The results of the survey were used to inform the Inspectorate's way forward.

One way of getting to know about stakeholders' concerns and issues in more detail has been to invite them to speak at an Inspectorate knowledge event. I would like to thank all of our speakers. As well as being informative, these sessions have identified a number of topics

for future inspection. Asylum Aid are due a particular thank you, having presented at two knowledge events, on 'Gender issues in asylum claims' and on 'Statelessness', and I plan to look at both topics when resources permit.

As ever, the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA) has made some extremely important contributions to the Inspectorate's work during the year. I was happy therefore to be able to respond quickly to a concern raised with me by ILPA in January 2017. This related to the Home Office's interpretation of the 'good character' requirement in the case of applications for British Citizenship made by young persons (those aged 10 to 17). The Inspectorate began work on a short notice inspection of this topic in March 2017.

Of course, the Home Office is also a key stakeholder. Some knowledge event speakers have been from the Home Office. During 2016–17, I have continued to have regular (roughly quarterly) meetings with the Directors General of Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration, to discuss recent and upcoming inspections and to learn about their priorities. I have also met regularly with the Second Permanent Under Secretary (PUS), who is my Senior Sponsor. In addition, I have encouraged my senior staff to develop relationships with managers in the Home Office, so that the Inspectorate stays abreast of any changes or initiatives that may affect our work.

I spoke at three external events during the year. The first was a Policy Seminar on Administrative Justice organised by the University of Manchester, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and supported by the Administrative Justice Forum and HM Courts and Tribunals Service, which looked at ensuring good initial decisions and administrative review.

The second was a presentation about the Inspectorate's role and work to a group of 50 or so Consuls General and consular staff at a Consular Corps of London (CCL) lunch. The CCL is a long-established, non-political, non-profit organisation that brings together accredited diplomats and consuls who are working in London in the field of consular affairs.

The third was a meeting of the Association of International Student Advisors (AISA) South East and London group. This was part of a wider initiative to engage stakeholders from the education sector, which has included meetings with Universities UK, Study UK, UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA of which AISA is a professional sub-group), the Association of Colleges, and English UK (the national association of accredited English language centres in the UK).

Collaborations with other inspectorates and similar bodies

Throughout the year, I 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 four Criminal Justice Inspectorates.⁵

In July 2016, I attended the annual Five Nations Public Sector Inspection, Audit, and Regulation Forum, chaired by Sir Tom Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for England and Wales. The theme for the Forum was 'Child Protection: The role of inspection, audit and regulation'. The principal speaker was Dame Lowell Goddard, then Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. There were also presentations from Ofsted and from the Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

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

While there was no opportunity to work jointly with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) on an inspection, I was able to draw on HMIC's experience and advice regarding software tools for analysis and visualisation of data. I was also pleased to assist with the recruitment of a new HM Inspector of Constabulary by sitting on the final selection panel.

In September 2016, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Peter Clarke. This focused on identifying the two inspectorates' overlapping areas of interest and the opportunities for the two inspectorates to co-operate, collaborate and communicate. Peter and I also agreed to meet quarterly to discuss our forward programmes, and how we might share best practice and collaborate in relation to skills training.

From April 2016, Home Office Internal Audit (HOIA) ceased monitoring the implementation of my recommendations, and this role passed to the Home Office Sponsor team, who provide me with updates that feed into my new programme of re-inspections. However, I continued to have quarterly meetings with HOIA to share findings from particular inspections/audits and to discuss future plans. Similarly, during 2016/17, I have also had meetings with other relevant inspecting and monitoring bodies, including the NAO and the Administrative Justice Forum.

The Inspectorate shares its accommodation with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland OBE, and his team. Kevin and I have had the opportunity to talk regularly and to discuss where our interests overlap. We agreed to make modern slavery the focus of a substantial piece of work in 2016/17, which we would tackle jointly. My report 'An Inspection of Border Force's Identification and Treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery' (July - October 2016), which includes a separate Foreword from Kevin and his own recommendations, was laid in Parliament on 2 February 2017.

Resources and planning

Budget and staffing 2016–17 and 2017–18

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 Second Permanent Under Secretary.

The budget for 2016–17 was £2.1m, of which £1.8m (86%) was designated for pay costs. With effect from 2016–17, the Inspectorate's accommodation costs were paid directly by the Home Office. There was no allocation for Capital expenditure. The agreed headcount was 30 full-time equivalents (FTEs). In practice, this represented a 'flat' allocation compared with the position finally reached in 2015–16 (after some in-year adjustments reversed earlier Home Office reductions to the budget and headcount).

2016/17 was a year of significant staff 'churn' for the Inspectorate. Having started the year with only 25 FTEs because of uncertainties about the budget and affordability, another ten members of staff left during 2016/17, either on promotion or to new posts in the Home Office. The Civil Service recruitment process⁶ is slow by comparison, and labour intensive, and the training programme for new inspectors makes it inefficient to take in staff in ones and twos.

Consequently, during most of 2016–17 the inspectorate operated at well below full strength. As well as impacting on the number of inspections it was able to complete, this resulted in a large (c. 16%) underspend, most of it pay costs. Happily, the Inspectorate will start 2017–18, fully up to strength, and although most inspectors will have just a few months experience, having invested in a comprehensive training programme I expect the Inspectorate to be fully effective within the first quarter.

Training and development

The large turnover in staff provided the impetus for a major revision to the training given to new joiners. A new two-month training programme was devised to cover the knowledge and skills required to be an effective inspector, working step by step through the inspection process, and attached at key points to a 'live' inspection so that, as well as learning, the trainees were contributing at an early stage to the Inspectorate's output.

This programme was rolled out for the first new intake in October - December 2016, and run again (with some adjustments) from January – March for a second group.

The new approach to induction meant taking in the new staff in batches, rather than as and when individuals were available to start, but the long-term benefits from putting everyone through a structured and comprehensive training programme more than compensated for any brief gains from having some staff join a week or two earlier.

⁶ ICIBI follows the Civil Service recruitment process and all inspectorate staff (except the Independent Chief Inspector) are Home Office employees

In the absence of an accredited training course dedicated to inspecting, in 2014–15 the Inspectorate adopted the 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. Looking ahead and with the 2016–17 new joiners in mind, in January 2017 the Inspectorate began exploring other options with Civil Service Learning, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and the Chartered Management Institute. It is also in regular dialogue with other inspectorates about opportunities for joint training.

Diversity

All of the Inspectorate staff are employed as permanent Home Office civil servants. Those recruited from elsewhere become Home Office civil servants on joining. During 2016–17, the Inspectorate ran four Civil Service-wide recruitment campaigns, and an ‘expression of interest’ exercise restricted to Home Office staff. As a result, the Inspectorate has had 15 new joiners between October 2016 and March 2017.

As at 31 March 2017, the staff profile was:⁷

- 46% male, 54% female
- Age bands
 - 25-34 25%
 - 35-39 25%
 - 40-44 25%
 - 45+ 25%
- 40% minority ethnic, 60% white
- 46% married, 54% not married
- 0% LGBT, 100% heterosexual/straight
- 7% disabled, 93% non-disabled
- 41% other religions, 59% Christian
- 48% with caring responsibilities, 52% with no caring responsibilities
- 43% non-flexible working, 57% flexible working

Values

The Inspectorate adheres to the Civil Service values:

- integrity
- honesty
- objectivity
- impartiality

⁷ Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Taken from the Office of National Statistics compliant monthly snapshot corporate Human Resources data for Home Office. Based on Home Office criteria and self-reporting, with the percentages for those who preferred not to say excluded

Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2016/17

Account	Pay/Cost Code	Spend
Pay Costs - Recurring	Pay & Allowances Pay Remit	1,236,212
	Premia Payments	122
	Annualised Working Hours	48
	Overtime	635
	Pay & Allowances Other	(7,547)
	Superannuation	226,513
	ERNIC	141,473
Pay Total		1,597,456
Other Costs and Services	Fees	7 (17,042)
	Research	13,569
	Other Costs	198
	Finance Costs	5
	File Storage	72
Special Payments		40
IT & Comms		8,124
Estates		14,552
AT Conferences		4,388
Training & Recruitment		366
AT Office Supplies & Services		40,558
AT Travel Subsistence		69,979
Non Pay Total		143,554
Resource Total		1,741,010
Grand Total		1,741,010

8 Expenditure on these three items consisted mainly of the costs of IAGCI commissions

Outlook and Plans 2017–18 to 2019–20

Resources

The Inspectorate budget for 2017–18 is flat at £2.1m, of which £1.85m is designated for pay costs. Subject to affordability, the headcount remains at 30 FTEs, including the Independent Chief Inspector's post.

With 30 FTEs the Inspectorate will have 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.

For planning purposes, each 'standard' inspection is allocated 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 and. Again, for planning purposes the former are allocated 60-75 working days and the latter 200 working days (elapsed time 12-16 weeks).

Rolling three-year Inspection Plan

In May 2016, I published the first three-year inspection plan (previously, the Chief Inspector had published an annual Plan that identified a certain 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 three-year plan was to provide a better sense of the overall shape and range of the Inspectorate's work programme, how planned inspections fit together thematically, and when particular topics would be examined. Because of the time inspections take to complete, plus the time between reporting to the Home Secretary and publication, some inspections will straddle two business years. The plan reflects when the work will start.

An updated three-year inspection plan is set out below. It includes a new Year 3 (2019–2020), which will take me up to the end of my term as Independent Chief Inspector. Meanwhile, the plan for 2017–18 has been revised to include those topics from the 2016–17 plan that I was unable to cover, primarily for resource reasons (see the Resources and Planning section), and remain relevant. It takes account of discussions I have had with ministers, officials and stakeholders about their issues and priorities, but is my plan and reflects the areas where I believe inspection is both necessary and will add value.

The Plan is based on certain assumptions, the key one being that the resources available to me remain broadly constant throughout the period. It also assumes that with a full headcount, and through finding further efficiencies in terms of our processes, some of the ground 'lost' in this year can be recovered in 2017–18. For this reason, as far as possible I have left the original

2017–18 plan intact, except where the topic is no longer relevant or the timing no longer works for external reasons. While it may ultimately prove necessary to slip some of this inspection work into 2018–19, I prefer not to do this at this stage.

As I noted in last year’s Annual Report, flexibility is important, not least because of the extent and pace of change in this area. The legislation that created the Inspectorate allows me to deviate from my published plan where necessary, so I will keep the three-year plan under review and make adjustments where necessary. Where I make any in-year changes, I will publish them on my website.

Inspection Plan 2017–18 to 2019–20

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

Theme 1: Protecting the border (identifying and intercepting risks and threats)				
Area	Topic	17/18	18/19	19/20
Intelligence	An inspection of the Intelligence Functions of Border Force and Immigration Enforcement was published 21 July 2016			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18 or 2018/19			
Customs Controls	An inspection of Border Force operations at Coventry and Langley postal hubs (March - July 2016) was published 13 October 2016			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18			
	Border Force Freight operations			●
Visa applications (crossover with Theme 2)	Visa Decision Making Centre(s) - focusing on the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of UKVI’s visa operations	○	●	●

UK Seaports and coastline	An inspection of Border Force operations at east coast seaports will be published in April 2017			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18			
	West Coast Ports (to include people and goods entering the UK via the Common Travel Area)		●	
	South Coast Ports (to include Dover)	●		
	The Border Force Cutter Fleet	○	»	»
UK Airports	The National Maritime Intelligence Centre (NMIC) – a standing item in Ports and Cutter Fleet inspections	»	»	»
	Immigration and customs controls of scheduled international flights	○	○	○
Border security partnerships	Juxtaposed controls			●

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

Area	Topic	17/18	18/19	19/20
Immigration routes	An inspection of family reunion applications (January – May 2016) was published 14 September 2016			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18			
	Asylum casework	●		●
	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	»	●	»
	Administrative Reviews			○
	An inspection of the Administrative Review Processes introduced following the 2014 Immigration Act (Sept – Dec 2015), published 26 May 2016			
	Re-inspection report due to be published mid-June 2017			

Routes to citizenship	Nationality casework – registration of children as British citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981	○		
	An inspection of the General Register Office for England and Wales, with particular emphasis on birth records (March – June 2016) was published 13 October 2016			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18			
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	●	»	»
	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			
	Immigration detainees, including the handling of further submissions and the provision of bail accommodation – aligned with HM Inspectorate of Prisons’ inspection programme, where possible			●
	Vulnerable adults, including identification and treatment victims of torture – a standing item in all relevant inspections	○	»	○
	Domestic Workers visa route			
	Women (gender bias) – a standing item in all inspections, plus a themed inspection in 2018/19	»	○	»
Particular social groups – a standing item where relevant, and forming part of the Asylum casework inspection in 2017/18	»	»	»	

Service Levels	Service standards (and internal targets) – a standing item in all inspections	»	»	»
	Charging for services – covered in relevant inspections, plus a system-wide inspection of in 2018/19	»	○	»
	Complaints handling will be a standing item in all inspections A re-inspection of Complaints Handling, work began in January 2017, due to report by early May 2017, and to be published by early July 2017	»	»	»
Syrian Refugee Programme	Progress towards the agreed targets and lessons learnt	●		

Theme 3: Compliance Management and Enforcement				
Area	Topic	17/18	18/19	19/20
Clandestine entrants	A short notice inspection of the Home Office response to 'Lorry Drops' was published 21 July 2016			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18			
	Clandestine entrants – identification and handling			●
'Hostile environment'	Checking of immigration status within civil registration processes – see also Theme 2 'Routes to citizenship'			
	An inspection of the 'hostile environment' measures relating to driving licences and bank accounts (January – July 2016) was published 13 October 2016			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18			
	An inspection of the implementation of the 2014 'hostile environment' provisions for tackling sham marriage was published 15 December 2016			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18			

	Landlord immigration checks	●		
	National Health Service charging	○		
	Illegal working		●	
	Status reviews - revocation of leave to remain and deprivation of citizenship	○		
	Overview of 'hostile environment' measures			○
Contact management	An inspection of reporting arrangements, including the work of Reporting Centres, work began in December 2016, due to report by mid-May 2017, and to be published by early July 2017			●
	Reporting arrangements, including Reporting Centres			
	'Helplines' (and published guidance)		○	
Removals	An inspection into failed right of abode applications and referral for enforcement action, published 13 October 2016			
	Possible re-inspection in 2017/18			
	An inspection of Removals, focusing on Foreign National Offenders, work began in January 2017, due to report by late May 2017, and to be published by late July			
	Migration Removals Pool (MRP), Voluntary Returns, Family Returns, and Emergency Travel Documents (last inspected 2015)		●	
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	●	»	»
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	»		○

Theme 4: Working with others				
Area	Topic	17/18	18/19	19/20
'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	»	●	●
	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	»	»	○
	'Onshoring' (to the UK) of immigration functions and remote decision-making	○		
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	●		
	Law Enforcement – information sharing and collaborative working		●	
	Overseas partners and stakeholders – relationship management, information sharing, comparative performance			●
Commercial contracts	National/strategically significant (Home Office 'Tier 1') contracts – performance/delivery management, alignment with in-house border and immigration functions		●	
	Regional or Local ('Tiers 2 and 3') contracts – Home Office visibility, plus performance/delivery management	●		
	Overseas contracts, for example Visa Application Centres (VACs) – a standing item in all Visa Decision Making Centre inspections	»	»	»
'Joint' Inspections	Collaborations with other Inspectorates and similar bodies (including short-term attachments, input to inspections and, where relevant, joint or complementary inspections)	○	○	○

Theme 5: Learning and improving				
Area	Topic	17/18	18/19	19/20
Country of Origin Information	Country of Origin (Col) 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	○	○	○
	Production, usefulness and use made of Col material within the Home Office – to include an assessment of the ICI's process for delivering Col reviews	●		
Litigation	Handling of litigation cases, including the work of Presenting Officers – inspection combined with Organisational Learning	●		
	Organisational learning from litigation cases, including Pre-Action Protocol (PAP) letters, Judicial Reviews, allowed appeals – then included as a standing item in relevant inspections		»	»
	Non-suspensive appeals – a standing item where relevant, plus a thematic inspection in 2019/20	»	»	○
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	»	»	
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	»	●	»
	Data/Management Information, record keeping - a standing item in all inspections, plus a thematic inspection in 2019/20	»	»	●
	Digital services at the border - a standing item in relevant inspections, plus a thematic inspection in 2018/19	»	●	»
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	●	●	●

Home Secretary Commissions				
Area	Topic	17/18	18/19	19/20
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.	•	•	•

Appendix 1: Reports published in 2016–17

Inspection reports

'An inspection of Border Force Operations at Manchester Airport' (July – October 2015), published 13 April 2016

'An inspection of the Administrative Review Processes introduced following the 2014 Immigration Act' (September – December 2015), published 26 May 2016

'An inspection of the Intelligence Functions of Border Force and Immigration Enforcement', published 21 July 2016

'An inspection of Country of Origin Information (Nigeria, Iran, Ukraine): May 2016', published 21 July 2016 (5)

'A short notice inspection of the Home Office response to 'Lorry Drops'', published 21 July 2016

'A re-inspection of Border Force operations at Heathrow Airport' (May 2016), published 8 September 2016

'An inspection of family reunion applications' (January - May 2016), published 14 September 2016

'An inspection of the General Register Office for England and Wales, with particular emphasis on birth records' (March - June 2016), published 13 October 2016

'An inspection into failed right of abode applications and referral for enforcement action', published 13 October 2016

'An inspection into the extent to which the police are identifying and flagging arrested foreign nationals to the Home Office and checking their status', published 13 October 2016

'A re-inspection of the handling of Tier 4 sponsor licence compliance' (July 2016), published 13 October 2016

'An inspection of Border Force operations at Coventry and Langley postal hubs' (March - July 2016), published 13 October 2016

'An inspection of the 'hostile environment' measures relating to driving licences and bank accounts' (January - July 2016), published 13 October 2016

'An inspection of the implementation of the 2014 'hostile environment' provisions for tackling sham marriage', published 15 December 2016

'An inspection of Border Force's identification and treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery', published 2 February 2017

'An inspection of Country of Origin Information (Afghanistan, Sudan, Vietnam): November 2016', published 3 February 2017

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information Reports

May 2016

Nigeria

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation, dated June 2015
- Gender-based Discrimination/Harm/Violence against Women, dated August 2015

Iran

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation, dated December 2015
- Illegal Exit, dated January 2016

Ukraine

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Fear of Organised Criminal Gangs, dated November 2015
- Victims of Trafficking, dated November 2015.

November 2016

Afghanistan

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Women Fearing Gender-Based Harm/Violence Country Policy Information Note (CPIN), dated February 2016
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity CPIN, dated February 2016

Sudan

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Failed Asylum Seekers CPIN, dated September 2015
- 'Sur Place' Activities CPIN, dated September 2015

Vietnam

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Trafficking CPIN, dated May 2016
- Opposition to Government CPIN, dated December 2014

Bangladesh

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- Minority Religious Groups CPIN, dated April 2016
- Political Opponents CPIN, dated February 2015

